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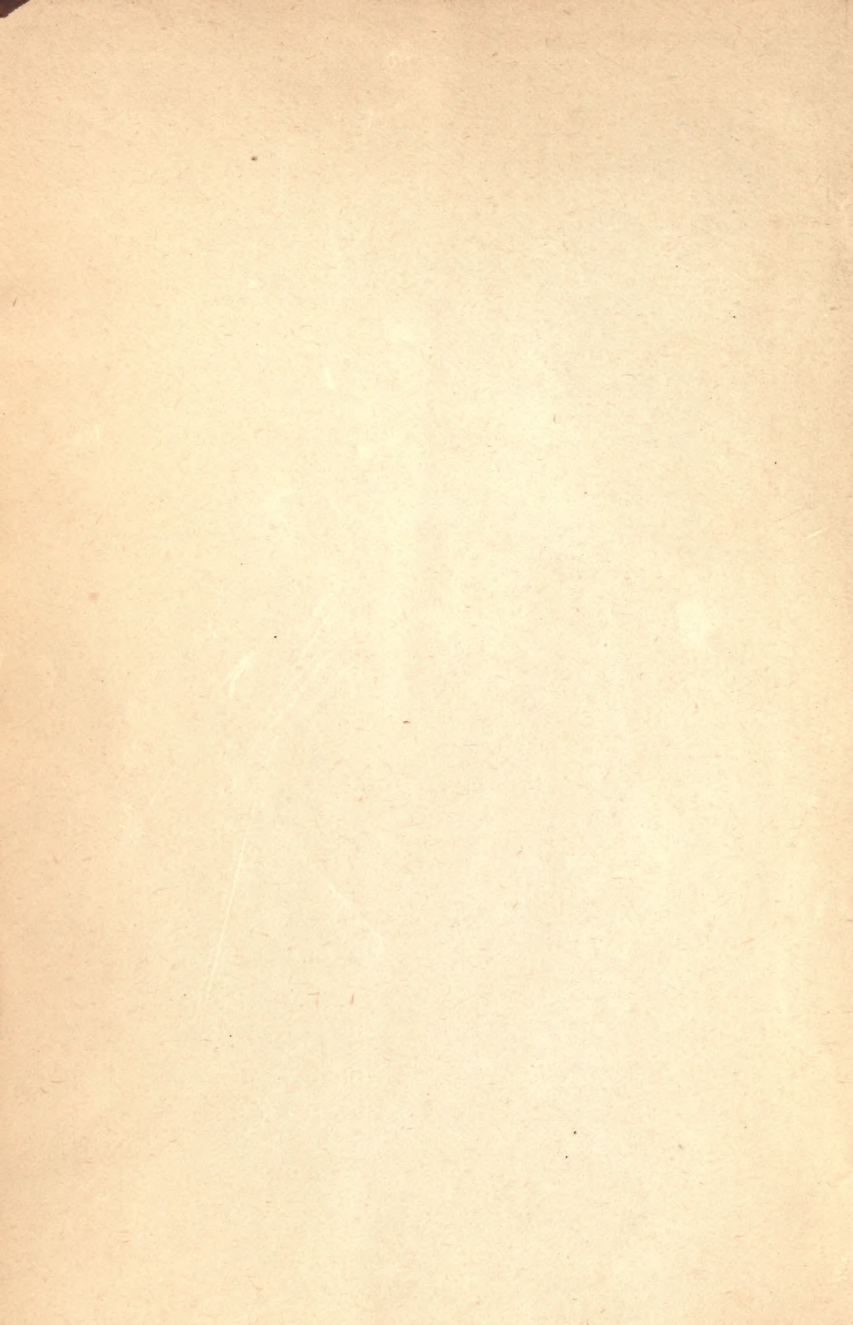
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God  
The Teacher  
OF  
Mankind











**THE APOSTLES' CREED.**

THE VIOLET CHIEF



# GOD THE TEACHER

OF

## MANKIND:

A PLAIN, COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION OF CHRISTIAN  
DOCTRINE.

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

BY

MICHAEL MÜLLER, C. SS. R.

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# CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
The Apostles' Creed in general	1
How do we know what God is	12
Independence of God	12
Eternity " "	16
Immutability " "	17
Immensity " "	19
Omniscience " "	23
Wisdom " "	24
Power " "	31
Holiness " "	32
Justice " "	34
Goodness " "	35
Mercy " "	38
Truthfulness " "	42
Faithfulness " "	43
Long-suffering " "	49
Invisibility " "	51
Unity " "	53
Trinity " "	57
God the Creator	77
The six Days of Creation	73
Why the World was created	97
Duration of the World	90
The Government of the World	94
The Evils of this World	97
The Providence of God	128
The Angels	124
The rebellious Angels	137
Hell	136
The Power of the fallen Angels	141
The Reward of the faithful Angels	158
What the good Angels do for us	159
Our Duty towards the Guardian Angels	167
The Creation of Adam and Eve	172

	PAGE.
The Garden of Eden - - - - -	185
The Fall of Man - - - - -	189
Punishment of Man - - - - -	194
Original Sin - - - - -	202
The Promise of a Redeemer - - - - -	209
Necessity of a Redeemer - - - - -	214
Jesus Christ, our Redeemer - - - - -	217
The Incarnation of the Son of God - - - - -	231
The Mother of God - - - - -	238
Life of Jesus Christ - - - - -	243
Christ died for All - - - - -	296
Why Many are lost - - - - -	298
Christ's copious Redemption - - - - -	302
What we owe to Christ - - - - -	304
The Sign of the Cross - - - - -	319
Christ's Descent into Limbo - - - - -	337
Christ's Resurrection - - - - -	332
Christ's Ascension into Heaven - - - - -	357
Christ, our Judge - - - - -	361
The General Judgment - - - - -	365
The Particular Judgment - - - - -	384
Purgatory - - - - -	396
The Holy Ghost - - - - -	409
Gifts of the Holy Ghost - - - - -	417
Communion of Saints - - - - -	424
Forgiveness of Sins - - - - -	450
The Resurrection of the Body - - - - -	459
Heaven - - - - -	470
Eternity of Hell - - - - -	492
The Punishment of the Damned - - - - -	497
The Number of the Damned - - - - -	513
The Damned are lost through their own Fault - - - - -	515
The four last Things of Man - - - - -	518
Profession of Faith - - - - -	533
How do People lose the Faith - - - - -	542



## THE APOSTLES' CREED.

A CERTAIN traveller, returning to his home from a distant country, came, at nightfall, to the entrance of a vast forest. Being unable to tarry or retrace his steps, he was obliged to pass through the forest in the darkness of the night. As he was about to enter these gloomy woods, he met with an old shepherd of venerable aspect, of whom he asked the way. "Alas!" said the shepherd, "it is not easy to show you the way. The forest is crossed by hundreds of paths which wind in every direction, and very much resemble one another. They all, except one, lead to the abyss." "To what abyss?" said the traveller. "The abyss which surrounds the forest," said the shepherd. "Moreover, the forest is not safe. It is filled with robbers and wild beasts. It is infested in particular with an enormous serpent, which commits the most frightful ravages. Scarcely a day passes but we find the mangled remains of some unhappy traveller who has fallen a prey to it. And yet, you must absolutely pass through this forest, in order to arrive at the country to which you are going. Touched with compassion, I have stationed myself at the entrance of this dangerous passage, in order to guide and to protect all that enter this forest. At certain distances along the route I have stationed my sons, who are animated with the same sentiments as myself, and fulfil the same offices of charity. I hereby offer you my

services and theirs, and I will accompany you if you desire it."

The air of candor of the old man, and the tone of honesty in which he spoke, inspired the traveller with confidence. He accepted the proposal. With one hand the old man took his lamp, and with the other he seized the arm of the traveller, and they instantly set out on their journey. After having travelled for some time, the traveller began to feel that his strength was giving out. "Lean on my shoulder," said his faithful guide. The traveller did so, and, thus supported, continued his journey.

Soon the light of the lamp began to grow dim, and cast only a faint, unsteady glimmer. "Our lamp is going out," cried the traveller in dismay: "what will become of us?" "O, do not fear!" answered the old man in a calm tone; "we shall soon arrive at the house of one of my sons, and he will fill our lamp with oil." The old man spoke the truth. In a short time a torch appeared gleaming through the darkness, and the traveller beheld a small but neat cottage standing on the roadside. At the well-known voice of the old man the door opened, the weary traveller was invited to take a seat, a frugal but substantial meal was placed before him, and he soon regained his wonted strength. After a rest of three-quarters of an hour the traveller continued his journey, accompanied now by the son of the venerable old man.

From time to time the traveller came to other cottages on his route, where he was kindly treated, and where he found new guides. He thus continued his journey during the entire night.

As the first rays of the dawn illumined the horizon, the traveller arrived safe at the extremity of the dangerous

forest. It was now that he fully understood, for the first time, the great kindness of the old man and his sons. He beheld at his feet a frightful abyss, from which arose the hoarse roar of a distant torrent.

"Behold," said his guide, "the abyss of which my father spoke to you! No one knows its depths; it is always covered with a thick fog, which the eye cannot penetrate." As he said these words he heaved a deep sigh, and wiped off the tears that trickled down his cheeks.

"You seem to have some secret sorrow?" said the traveller. "Alas! why should I not grieve?" answered the guide. "How can I look on this abyss without thinking of the many unhappy souls that are lost here every day? It is all useless for my father and myself to speak to them, and to offer them our services. Very few heed us. The greater part, after having walked for a few hours in our company, accuse us of wishing to terrify them by vain fears; they despise our warnings, they abandon us, and very soon they go astray, and perish miserably. They are either devoured by the enormous serpent, or assassinated by robbers, or engulfed in this frightful abyss. For, as you see, there is only this narrow bridge, over which you can cross this abyss; and we alone know the path that leads to it. Go on now courageously," said he, turning to the traveller, and embracing him with tenderness; "as soon as you have crossed the bridge, you will find that it is broad daylight, and that you are at home." The traveller, filled with gratitude, thanked his charitable guide, promised that he would never forget him, crossed the bridge at a rapid pace, and was soon safe and happy in the midst of his beloved family.

This traveller is every one of us. The dark forest is



this world, so full of trials and dangers. The cruel serpent is the devil, the enemy of souls. The robbers and assassins are the human passions, wicked companions, and the teachers of false religions. The deep abyss is hell. The various paths which traverse the forest are the various false religions: "The ways that seem to man to be good, but which lead to destruction." (Prov.) The country beyond is heaven, our true home. The bridge over which we must pass to reach heaven, is the grace of a happy death. The good, charitable shepherd is Almighty God, who, from the beginning of the world, has placed his assistants in every part of the globe to lead men safely to heaven. His assistants were the patriarchs and the prophets, during four thousand years; after that time, his assistants were his well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the apostles, and their lawful successors in the Catholic Church. The lamp is the light of faith,—the true religion revealed by God to the Roman Catholic Church. The oil is the grace of God; and the food and refreshment are the sacraments and prayer by which the grace of God is obtained and increased. The only path that leads us safely through the dangerous forest of this world is the firm, practical belief in all those religious truths which God teaches us through his Church. These truths, however, are many and various. To remember them more easily and more readily, our forefathers in the faith have very wisely reduced them to these four heads:—

The Apostles' Creed, the commandments of God and of the Church, the sacraments and prayer. The Apostles' Creed contains the leading articles of faith; the commandments of God and of the Church contain our duties towards God, towards ourselves, and towards our neighbor;

the sacraments are given by Christ our Lord as *particular* means, and prayer as a *universal* means, to obtain the grace of God. The prayers which every Christian should know are the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. Besides these prayers, every Christian should also know the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition. To the devout recital of these acts the Church has attached an indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days. She has granted a plenary indulgence to those who daily recite these acts for a month, and receive, in the course of the same month, the sacraments of penance and of the holy Eucharist. (In Dec., 1754, by Benedict XIV.)

## THE APOSTLES' CREED.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he arose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The apostles were the first pastors of the Church. They received the truths of salvation from the lips of Jesus Christ himself, and they have handed those truths down to us through their successors, the bishops of the

Catholic Church. Some of the most important of those truths are contained in the Apostles' Creed. The word "creed" comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means "I believe;" so that the Apostles' Creed means the belief, or formula of faith, taught by the apostles. St. Augustine and other fathers of the Church assure us that the apostles, before they separated "to go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature," composed, at the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, this creed, and taught it everywhere, as a means of enabling all the faithful to believe and speak the same things, and to distinguish Catholics from non-Catholics. From that time to this, the Apostles' Creed has been learned by all Christians, of every age and of every country. For the first three centuries the Apostles' Creed was not committed to writing, lest it should fall into the hands of unbelievers. It was delivered down by tradition, that is, by word of mouth. With the exception of Tertullian, no author, before the reign of Constantine the Great, dared to write down the Creed. After that period, when the danger that it might be ridiculed by Jew and Gentile had passed away, it was written down, and, first of all, appeared in the works of St. Athanasius and of St. Basil.

Besides this Creed of the apostles, there are other creeds, or professions of faith. These were composed by the Church at different times, to impress her belief more clearly in those doctrines of the Apostles' Creed, which were denied by wicked men.

In the fourth century, Arius, a priest in the church of Alexandria, denied the divinity of the Word made flesh. To condemn the error of this heresiarch, the Church, in the year 325, convoked a General Council at Nice, a city



of Bithynia. The assembled fathers found it expedient to give a fuller explanation about the Son of God made flesh. The explanation of the council was embodied in the Apostles' Creed, which, together with the addition, was thenceforth called the symbol of Nice, or the Nicene Creed. This Creed is often said by the priest at that part of the Mass when the people are standing up after the Gospel. A short time afterwards, Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost. The Church was obliged to call a General Council, which met at Constantinople in the year 381, and delivered to the faithful the genuine belief upon this article of faith. The explanation furnished by the council was embodied in the Nicene Creed, and this second enlargement of the Apostles' Creed was called the Creed of Constantinople.

About this time a multitude of wicked men attempted to corrupt the pure doctrine of the apostles, by commingling with it their errors concerning the essence and properties of Christ's humanity. There were in the Church many zealous pastors, who arose to guard the purity of faith against false doctrines; and, amongst them, the unknown author of that Creed which was immediately recognized as being so orthodox and beautiful, that, by unanimous consent, it was attributed to the most celebrated champion of the faith, St. Athanasius, and still passes as the Athanasian Creed. It was composed, to explain the true teaching of the Church against the Arians. This Creed is said by the priest in the divine office for the Sunday. Like the three last creeds, the symbol of the Council of Trent, or the Creed of Pius IV, so called from the pope under whose pontificate it was framed, was suggested by the exigencies of the time, and was drawn up to give a summary of

the genuine doctrines of Christ, at an epoch when the innovators of the sixteenth century were employing every expedient to lead the faithful into error.

Pope Benedict XIV tells us that, in the first ages of the Church, no convert to the faith was baptized without having previously made a formal profession of faith and of renunciation of the heresies of his time. (Profession of Faith of Pope Pius IV.) It was also customary in the Church to exact a particular profession of faith from those Catholics whose orthodoxy was suspected, from heretics who had returned to the Church, and from newly-appointed bishops. In conformity with this custom, the Roman Ritual requires that the newly-reconciled should recite the Creed of Pope Pius IV as a solemn declaration of their faith in all the truths which the Catholic Church teaches, especially those which are denied by Protestants. It should be carefully remembered that, in these several successive creeds, no new doctrines are taught, nor is any addition made to the deposit of faith delivered to the Church by the apostles. They are all the same in substance as the Apostles' Creed; but they unfold its doctrines, and present an explanation of its several parts, in a more precise manner. Thus, for instance, the Apostles' Creed says: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth;" the Nicene Creed says: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, *and of all things visible and invisible.*" The words, *one*, and, *of all things visible and invisible*, were added by the Church, to confound the Manicheans, and other heretics, who denied that there is only one God, and asserted that God had created only *invisible* things, such as our souls, and that all *visible* things were made by an evil spirit.

The fathers and doctors of the Church have written and preached in defence of the Apostles' Creed. For the sake of this Creed, thousands of tender virgins have quitted everything that was near and dear to them on earth; and for its sake, thousands of martyrs have shed their hearts' blood.

We read, in the history of the martyrs, that a child of seven years was denounced to a wicked governor, named Asclepiades. He was brought before that man, who endeavored, by caresses, to make him give up his religion. "It is no use," answered the courageous child, "I am a Christian; for I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord——." Asclepiades, in a rage, would not let him finish. He sent for the mother of the child, and ordered a soldier to scourge him before her, in order that she herself might urge her child to worship the idols. Whilst the cruel lash was tearing his flesh, the youthful martyr repeated: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty," etc. After some time he turned to his mother, and said to her: "Mother, I am thirsty." "Courage, my child!" said the heroic mother; "have patience a little longer, and Jesus Christ himself will give thee to drink in heaven." This sad spectacle drew tears from all who witnessed it. The cruel tyrant alone remained unmoved. Ashamed of seeing himself vanquished by so tender a child, he caused his head to be cut off, and thus sent him the sooner to heaven.

As the Apostles' Creed is a short compendium of the principal truths of salvation, its recital is one of the best acts of faith we can make, and therefore a most powerful weapon to overcome the temptations against faith. When



St. Vincent de Paul was tempted against faith, he recited the Apostles' Creed, in order to banish the temptation. He placed a copy of the Creed on his breast, and said to our Lord : "My Jesus, whenever I am violently tempted against faith, and put my hand on this copy of the Creed, look upon this act as a proof that I do not wish to yield to this temptation."

We read, in the life of St. Peter, surnamed the Martyr, that he learned the Apostles' Creed at school. His parents, who were heretics, forbade him to say the Creed. Peter, however, often recited it, and became a very fervent Catholic. He joined the Dominican Order, and obtained from God the grace to die a martyr. Amidst his great tortures he continually recited the Creed. At last, when he was no longer able to speak, he dipped his finger into the blood that flowed from his wounds, and wrote, in the dust, the words, "I believe."

When we were infants and were taken to the Church to be baptized, we were asked by the priest whether we believed all the truths contained in the Apostles' Creed : for, no one can become a child of God by baptism until he receives the teaching of Jesus Christ and of his Church. As we had not then sense enough to answer for ourselves, our godfathers and godmothers answered for us that we did believe, and, as a proof of our belief, repeated in our name, in a loud voice, the Creed. Since that time we have learned to repeat it ourselves, and have been taught to say it daily in our morning and night prayers as an act of thanksgiving for the gift of faith, and in order that the truths of the Creed may be always before our mind, and may thoroughly penetrate our hearts.

## THE FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

“I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR  
OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.”

The Apostles' Creed is divided into three principal parts. The first part describes the first person in God, and the most wonderful work in creation; the second part describes the second person, and the mystery of man's redemption; the third part speaks of the doctrine of the third person. The several sentences of each part are called articles; for, as the members of the body are divided by joints, so, in this profession of faith, whatever is to be believed distinctly and separately from anything else, is appropriately called an article. Now, in the Apostles' Creed, there are twelve articles of faith, the first of which is, “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.”

## I.—ON GOD.

### 1. How do we know what God is?

*We know what God is, because God made himself known as the being who is independent, eternal, immutable, immense, all-knowing, all-wise, almighty, infinitely holy and just, good, merciful, true, faithful, and long-suffering.*

God has never been wanting to his own. Having created men to know him, love him, and serve him, he did not leave them in the dark. On many occasions, and in various ways, he manifested himself to them. He spoke, at all times, to men by the works of his creation, and by the voice of their consciences. But in order to leave man no possible excuse for not arriving at the knowledge of God, the Lord of heaven and earth revealed himself to man by his own word. After God had made man, he appeared to him, and, like a good father, told him who he was. God gave man the light of the Holy Ghost, so that man knew God, knew him as the Being who is independent, eternal, immutable, immense, all-knowing, all-wise, almighty, infinitely holy and just, good, merciful, true, faithful, and long-suffering.

### 2. What do you mean when you say God is independent?

*That he is the being who is of himself, and is absolutely free. All things depend on him, but he depends on no one.*

The great privilege of God, nay, the whole of God, is to be his own, that is, to exist of himself and to depend on no one. All creatures, however grand and excellent they



may be, are nothing in reality, because, whatsoever they have, they have from God, who has created them and who preserves them ; and this, in such a manner that, if God were for a single moment to cease preserving them, they would instantly lose their being and return to nothing. God, on the contrary, because he exists of himself,—that is, has no cause of his existence, but exists because it is his nature and his essence always to exist,—cannot fail ; nor can there be any one to destroy him, or to diminish his greatness, his power, his happiness. When God said to Moses, “I will send thee to Pharaoh, that thou mayst bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt,” Moses said to God : “Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel, and say to them : The God of your fathers hath sent me to you. If they should say to me : What is his name ? what shall I say to them ? God said to Moses, I am who am. Thou shalt say to them : He who is hath sent me to you.” (Exod. iii.) In these words, “I am who am,” God has given us the best idea of himself and his nature.

“I am who am :” I am the Being of whom no human or angelic understanding can have a perfect idea. I am that Being who is all in all ; who is that by whom all beings are ; who is that on whom all things depend. I am the One from whom all proceed, and who is self-existent. I am the first cause, the last end, the centre and the foundation of all beings.

“I am who am :” I am an all-powerful will, a ravishing and ineffable perfection, an infallible source of reason, a power without infirmity, justice without passion, truth without error, immensity without bounds, an eternity without beginning or end.

“I am who am :” I am the author of all that is visible or

invisible ; the beautiful, by whom all things are rendered beautiful ; the good, from whom all derive good. I am in the sun to give you light ; in the fire to give you warmth ; in the water to refresh you ; in your daily bread to nourish you ; in the flowers to delight you, and in the earth to support and sustain you.

"I am who am : " I am an incomprehensible Being who comprehends all ; an invisible Being who sees all ; an indivisible Being who divides all ; an inaccessible Being who is in all ; an eternal Being who produces all ; a motionless Being who moves all ; an invariable Being who changes all ; a Being who dwells in himself, is happy in himself, sufficient for himself, and finds all in himself ; who is great without quantity, good without quality, beautiful without figure, infinite without number, eternal without length, and all-perfect without parts.

"I am who am : " I am a Being who surrounds all, and is not divided ; who is in all, and is not confined ; with all, and not separated ; above all, and not lifted up ; below all, and not lowered. It is in him you live, move, and have your being.

"I am who am : " I am the Being whose nature is all goodness, whose grandeur is all majesty, whose life is all fruitfulness, whose understanding is all wisdom, whose will is all sanctity, whose thoughts are all light, whose inclinations are all love, whose actions are all power, whose eternity is all duration, and whose movements are nothing but rest.

"I am who am : " I am a Being ever present, but never seen ; always moving and always resting ; always receiving, without amassing anything ; always giving, without decreasing his store ; always loving, without inquietude ; always seeking, without going astray from the centre of

his peace and holiness,—a Being who is incomprehensible at all times, in all places, to all minds, and to all hearts. All time will never measure his duration ; all places cannot contain his immensity ; all minds can never comprehend his greatness ; all hearts can never sufficiently love his goodness,—a Being who is absolutely free, depending on no creature, neither needing, nor capable of needing, the help of any ; a Being incomprehensible in his nature, admirable in his works, adorable in the angels, amiable in men, most desirable in the joy of the blessed in heaven, and most terrible in the example of the damned, who wished to be independent of God.

Lucifer and his rebellious angels, in their pride, declared themselves independent of God. Lucifer said : “ I will ascend into heaven ; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the most High.” (Isa. xiv, 13, 14.) But those proud angels soon found out their dependence on God ; for St. Michael the Archangel and his angels fought with Lucifer and his angels, who did not prevail, nor was their place found any longer in heaven. “ And the great dragon (Lucifer) was cast forth upon the earth,—the old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole earth ; and his angels were sent forth with him.” (Apoc. xii, 9.) “ God,” says St. Peter, “ did not spare the angels who sinned, but delivered them over, bound in the chains of darkness, to be tormented and to be reserved for judgment.” (2 Pet. iii, 4.) Those rebellious angels, by leaving God, lost forever the life, or the grace of God, that was in them. In like manner, every man who leaves God by sin, forfeits the life of God that is in him, and makes himself most miserable for time and eternity.

### 3. What do you mean when you say God is eternal?

*That he never had a beginning, and will never have an end.*

God is from all eternity. The hills, valleys, and rivers were not made; the sun, moon, and stars were not made; but God was there. God never had a beginning; God is eternal. Who can measure an ocean which has no bottom? Who can go back and back and say, Here eternity began? No; we know when all things began, but God is from eternity to eternity. A thousand years are in his sight but as yesterday. In regard to God himself, there is no time; the past, the present, and the future, are all present to him.

God will never cease to live; he will never have an end: "Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever." (Heb. i, 8.) All creatures perish and die, but God will never die: "They shall perish, but thou shalt continue." (Heb. i. 11.) The hard stones are worn away by the winds and the rains; the grass dies; the flowers fade away; the leaves drop off the trees; the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, breathe out their last breath; the beasts perish in the fields; empires, kingdoms, and nations pass away; our bodies return to dust, because God has said: "Thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return." The stars will fall from heaven; the heavens and the earth will pass away, and, last of all, death, which destroys all other things, will itself be destroyed. And when the heavens and the earth shall have passed away, God will make a new and more beautiful heavens and earth (Apoc. 21); and from the dust of the body in the grave he will make a more beautiful body, shining like the sun in its brightness. Thus all things perish and die. God alone lives for ever and ever.



**4. What do you mean when you say God is immutable ?**

*That he and his decrees are not liable to any change.*

God is an unchangeable Being. Whilst everything in this world changes, God remains always the same. We grow older every day ; but God is always the same eternal God. We may become more virtuous every day ; but God is always the same infinitely holy God. He can neither increase nor decrease in holiness. We may acquire more wisdom, more learning, every day ; but God cannot acquire any new knowledge. Millions of years ago, he knew as much as he knows now. He can neither gain nor lose anything. After having lavished upon us millions and millions of spiritual and temporal blessings, he is still the same infinitely powerful God. "With God there is no change," says St. James the Apostle, "nor shadow of alteration." (i, 17.) "Behold I live for ever and ever," says the Lord, "and I change not." (Apoc. i, 18 ; Mal. iii, 6.)

Nor are the decrees of God liable to any change. How often do we change the plans or resolutions which we have formed because something happens that we did not foresee, and, on that account, are obliged to change our minds and actions ! But with God it is not so. He is unchangeable in will and action. Nothing can happen that he did not foresee. Hence he says : "My counsel shall stand, and all my will shall be done." (Isa. xlv, 10.)

But it may sometimes appear to us as if God and his decrees were changeable. Here is a man. Yesterday he was yet a great sinner ; but to-day he has made a good confession. Yesterday God was very much displeased with that man, and determined to punish him ; but to-day

God loves that man, and promises heaven to him. Now, does not God, in this instance, appear to have changed his will? No; God always hates sin and loves virtue. Yesterday God beheld sin in that man, but to-day he beholds virtue in him. Hence, yesterday God was necessarily displeased with that man, but to-day he loves him. It is then not God, but that man, who is changed.

At the command of God, Jonas the Prophet went to Ninive, the great city, and said: "Yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed." And the men of Ninive did penance, and God spared the city: "And the evil which God had said he would do to them, he did it not." (Jonas iii, 10.) Now, does not God appear here to have changed his decree? No; God's decree is that the city should be destroyed if the inhabitants are not converted. But the Ninivites were converted. Thus, it is not the decree of God, but the hearts of the Ninivites that were changed.

The remembrance of this great truth, "God is eternal and immutable," has more than once rendered the wisdom of children superior to that of old men. In a tender age St. Teresa retired into a solitary place, and spoke to herself thus: "Teresa, if you choose the perishable goods of this world, you will perish with them forever. But if you choose the everlasting goods, you will be eternally happy. Choose which you please." Young Stanislas de Koska gave all to God, and nothing to the world. Being asked why he acted so strangely, "I am not made for this world," he answered, "but for the world to come."

### 5. What do you mean when you say God is immense ?

*That he is in heaven, on earth, and in all places.*

God is everywhere. He is in heaven, in the blue skies, in the air which we breathe, in the rain, in the sunshine. God is on the earth, and on all the length and breadth of the earth. He is in the deep waters of the sea. He is in the house where we live, in the room where we sleep, in the church where we pray, in the place where we work, in the sandy desert where the foot of man never trod. God fills us more than water fills a sponge : God is in our heart. There is no place too small for him. An infidel met a Catholic going to church. "Where are you going ?" said the former. "To church," replied the latter. "Is the God you are going to worship a great or a little God ?"

"He is both, sir," said the Catholic. "How can that be ?" "He is so great, sir, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him ; and so little, that he can dwell in my heart."

God is in the light and in the darkness. Light and darkness are the same to him. He sees in the light as he sees in the dark. The dark is not dark to God.

But how is God present everywhere ? How are we present anywhere ? The hand is present in one place, the foot in another ; so that the hand is not where the foot is. But it is not so with God. Part of God is not in one place, and part of him in another. God is all everywhere. God is in our heart with his whole self—with all his wisdom, and power, and greatness ; he is there just the same as he is on his throne in heaven, where all the angels fall down before him and adore him. Let us therefore be afraid to

do anything wicked, for God sees us: "In him we live, move and are." (Acts xvii, 27.)

In a certain town, the name of which is not known, there lived a woman called Thais. She led a very wicked life. Her mother, instead of teaching her what was good, had taught her all that was bad. The scandal which Thais gave was known through the whole country. All good people were sorry for her bad example. Still, in the midst of her wickedness, there was one good thing—she never forgot a lesson which she had learned in her childhood, that "there is a God who will reward the just, and punish the wicked." Perhaps it was because she thought sometimes about this great truth, which she had learned in the catechism, that God was so good to her. God wished to save her from hell. So he put it into the heart of a holy monk, called Paphnucius, to go and speak to her, and try to convert her; and he set off. His journey was a long one. When he came near the house of Thais, she was standing at the window. When she saw that he wanted to speak to her, she made a sign to him to come in. Paphnucius therefore went into the room where Thais was alone by herself. "What is it that you want?" said Thais; "what have you come to speak to me about?" Paphnucius said: "It is a very great thing that I have to say to you. I do not want anybody to hear it except you. I want to be alone with you." "But," said Thais, "we are alone now. There is nobody in the room except you and me." "Yes," said Paphnucius, "there is some one else here." "Who is it?" said Thais, "for I see no one." Then Paphnucius answered: "There is the *great God present here*,—that God who sees all your grievous sins, the souls you have ruined; that God who can cast both your body



and soul into hell, is present here. He sees you. He is looking at you now at this moment." These words, "*God is present,*" struck the ears of Thais, and the grace of God went into her heart. She turned pale, and trembled, and fell on her knees. The tears ran down from her eyes. "O father!" she said, "pray for me, that God may have mercy on my poor soul. Lay upon me any penance you please. I will do it. I ask only for three hours, and then I will do anything you bid me." She spent the three hours well. About one hour after she had been talking with Paphnucius, there was a large fire burning in the market-place. Crowds of people were standing round in wonder. Thais had taken all the beautiful things in her house, and all her fine dresses, which had so often been the occasion of sin. She had them all put in a heap in the middle of the market-place. Then she took a light and set fire to them. While they were burning, she cried out to the people who stood round: "Let those who have followed me in my sins, follow me in my repentance." Nothing remained but a heap of black ashes. The crowd went away. Then Thais went back to Paphnucius, ready to do whatever he should bid her for the salvation of her soul. He led her therefore to a convent, put her in a small room, and put a seal on the door, that nobody might go in to disturb her. There was a small window in the room, through which he desired the sisters to give her every day a little bread and water. When Paphnucius was going away, she said to him: "Father, tell me how I must pray to God." "You are not worthy," he said, "to have God's holy name on your lips, or to lift up to him your hands, with which you have committed so many sins. You shall say only one prayer, and this shall be your prayer: 'O

*thou who didst create me, have mercy on me !”* Three years passed, and the sisters heard her always, night and day, weeping and crying out, “O thou who didst create me, have mercy on me !” At the end of the three years, St. Paul, a holy monk, prayed to God to know if her sins were pardoned. Almighty God showed to him a seat in heaven of wonderful beauty, and told him that this seat was prepared for Thais. Then Paphnucius came back to the convent, and took the seal off the door. He told her that she might come out and be with the sisters. Two weeks after, Thais was no more. She died the death of a saint. Her soul was with the angels in heaven, and her name on earth was the name of a saint. How great, then, are these words: “*God is present ; he sees me ; he hears me*” ! In a minute they changed one of the greatest of sinners into a saint.

It is a blessed thing to remember, as often as we can, that God is present. Everything we see ought to make us think of God. The light of the sun tells us of the grace of God, “which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.” (John i.) The beautiful flowers speak to us of God’s beauty. The green grass and the autumn fruits of the earth speak of God’s providence ; the hard rocks, which seem never to wear out, tell us of God’s eternity. In our fellow-men whom we meet, we find the image and likeness of God. Fire and storms, and war and sickness, and famine and death, speak of God’s justice.

Remembering thus that God is present, let us often say a short prayer to him, such as: “My God ! I believe that thou art present. I adore thee. I hope in thee. Make me love thy holy will, more and more.” Remembering that God is present, let us offer to him all our thoughts,

words, and actions, with those of Jesus Christ, saying: "My Jesus! I do this for the love of thee." But let us do our actions well and without sin. The saints became saints because they did all their actions in the presence of God. When St. Rose of Lima was twelve years old, she never forgot the presence of God all day long. When she was praying, or working, or eating, or walking, or speaking, she always remembered the presence of God. This is what the saints do in heaven: they always see God. "Walk before me," said the Lord to Abraham, "and be perfect:" that is, "and thou wilt become perfect."

**6. What do you mean when you say God is all-knowing?**

*That he knows all things past, present, and future, even our most hidden thoughts.*

Our natural understanding and our acquired knowledge are limited, and subject to error. But it is not so with God. As he is everywhere, he sees and knows all things. He knows every grain of sand on the earth. He sees the tops of the mountains and the depths of the seas. He knows every flower in the fields, every tree in the forests, every creeping thing, and every beast on the face of the earth. He knows every fish that swims in the water, and every bird that flies in the air. He knows every star in the skies. He knows every angel in heaven, every man, woman, and child on the earth. He knows every hair on our head, every motion of our body. He knows all the sins of every man. There is no creature which he does not see and know. He sees at once, without effort, all that actually is, all that is possible, all that has been or will be; our thoughts, dispositions, and intentions, whether for

good or for evil, the most secret aspirations of our hearts "All things are naked and open to him." (Heb. iv, 13. God sees all things, not as they look to us, but as they are in themselves. We cannot hide anything from God. Ananias and Sapphira believed they could tell a lie without being discovered, and so hide their sin from man. But they thought not of God : and what a dreadful punishment fell upon them ! "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God !" (Rom. xi, 33.)

"All wisdom is from the Lord God." (Ecclus. i, 1.) If we ask God, he will give us wisdom and knowledge. He will not give us the knowledge of the stars, or trees, or animals. He will not teach us how to obtain money, or to be great in this world. God will give us the wisdom of heaven, teaching us to know ourselves, and the sins by which we have offended him. He will teach us to fear him, to keep his commandments, and to save our souls.

### **7. What do you mean when you say God is all-wise ?**

*That he knows perfectly well what is good, and how to accomplish it.*

He who knows and wills what is good, and uses the proper means to accomplish it, is called a wise man. Now, God knows perfectly well what is good, and he wills nothing but what is good, because from him, who is supreme goodness itself, no evil can proceed. And in order to accomplish his designs, God does not use such means as are likely to accomplish his designs ; but he chooses such as he knows will infallibly accomplish his will. There is a physician. He has many patients. He prescribes for them such medicines as he thinks will benefit them. However, it happens very often that certain patients,



instead of being benefited by medicines, are only rendered worse by them. Thus the works of all men are more or less defective, either because men do not wish to make them better, or because they do not know how to render them more perfect. Such is not the case with God. He knows what is good, he wills only what is good, and he has the power to do what is good, and, therefore, we call him *all-wise*: "With him is wisdom and strength; he hath counsel and understanding." (Job. xii, 13.) How great is the wisdom which God manifests in all his works!

We see a family remarkable for its peace, order, and regularity. We say, at once, there is a wise head who presides over that family. We behold a peaceful state, in which the arts flourish, laws are observed, and justice is respected. We say, there is a wise sovereign who commands in that state. We observe a large flock of sheep, grazing in fertile pastures; afterwards they herd together in the same fold, and are sheltered from the jaws of the ravenous wolf. We say, there is a careful shepherd who keeps watch over that flock. We see a vessel in open sea running with all its sails unfurled before the wind, and making directly for the port. We say, without hesitation, there is a skilful pilot who holds the helm of that vessel. Whilst we view the structure of the universe, who shall be able, said the prophet, to "*make the harmony of heaven to sleep?*" (Job xxxviii, 37.) In a still and serene night we lift our eyes to heaven, and behold the striking spectacle which the firmament presents to us: those numberless stars, which march, as it were, in order of battle, through the immense spaces of heaven, under the standard of Providence which conducts them; the brilliant and lively splendor of the celestial bodies, which, like so many

resplendent diamonds, give lustre to the heavens; the admirable regularity of their motions:—at a determinate hour the star is to rise, and it appears; the moment is fixed for its setting, and it disappears:—the constancy and perpetuity of their courses; from the beginning of the world, without interruption and interval, we have seen their evolutions begin, end, and return. We behold all this, and we are forced to exclaim with St. Paul: “O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!” (Rom. xi, 33.)

From the heavens we cast down our eyes on the earth. What new, striking instances of divine wisdom appear in the variety of objects with which it is so plentifully stored: trees, fruits plants, animals; the different rivers, which, like so many veins, carry their refreshing waters through different parts of the thirsty earth; trees loaded with fruit, and meadows diversified with flowers!

The world is full of curious insects: they swim in water, they live in every thing; they are curiously and wonderfully made; all have limbs, habits, and character, as men have. Why does the little bee divide her honeycomb into cells? Who taught her that it would thus be stronger? Who told her that, if the honey were put in one large vessel, it would turn sour and spoil?

What great wisdom does God show in the human body! The body is made of the slime and dust of the earth, and yet the body is one of the greatest works of the wisdom of God. In the body there are strong bones on which the body rests, just as a house rests on pillars and props. There are in the body many bones different in size and shape. If the hand, for example, consisted of only one bone we could not bend our fingers, or take hold of any-

thing: thus there are in each hand twenty-seven bones, beautifully joined together. The eyes are in the head, which is the highest part of the body, that we may see things far off. The eye is a round white ball. In the middle of this ball is an opening, called the pupil of the eye, for light to pass through. Round this opening is a beautiful net or curtain, called the iris. When the light is too strong, this net becomes larger, to let in less light. When there is little light, the curtain becomes smaller, to let in more light. This net is black or brown, or blue or grey. How then does the eye see things? We must, first of all, know that light travels two hundred thousand miles every second. The earth is twenty-four thousand miles in circumference, so that the light would go round the earth eight times in a second. The light, then, comes from a tree, or a house, or any thing we are looking at, and produces on it a picture of the things thus seen. It passes through the opening, or pupil of the eye, and leaves the picture on the back of the eye. The picture goes from the back of the eye along the nerves to the brain, and from the brain it goes to the soul. In one moment we can see millions of things all at once—trees, leaves, men, houses, towns, etc. And the pictures of these millions of things are all at the same within the space of half-an-inch at the back of the eye; and yet they do not get in one another's way. If a man had to paint a million pictures on half-an-inch of paper, there would be confusion. But the eye is the work of the wisdom of God.

What is the voice? How do we speak and sing? The air which we breathe in, and then exhale, with the lungs, rises in the windpipe to the throat. When the breath comes near the top of the windpipe, it strikes

against two little strings of flesh less than an inch long. The striking of the breath against these two strings makes a sound, and that sound is the voice. The vowels, *a e i o u*, are made simply by the breath striking against these strings. The consonants, *b c d t*, etc., are not made till the breath gets into the mouth, and then they are made with the help of the tongue, teeth, and roof of the mouth, and the nose.

Singing also is nothing but the sound which comes from the breath striking against the two little strings at the top of the windpipe. In singing, there may be two hundred and forty changes of the voice or tones; and in changing from one tone to another, the breath passes over only one twelve-hundredth part of an inch. So wonderful, and yet so simple, is the voice by which we can make known to others our thoughts! (Furniss' Tracts.)

What shall we say of the regular succession of the seasons? With what exactness is the year divided, as if the parts of it were weighed out to them in a balance? Do they not appear, says St. John Chrysostom, like four sisters that, by inheritance, share equally the property of their father? Each of the seasons is quite content with its own allowance and expects nothing more, whilst all seem ambitious to pour forth their precious gifts into our bosoms, as the share of power passes through their hands. Spring revives the earth, and clothes it with pleasant verdure. Summer enriches the fields with its golden crops. Autumn bends under the weight of plentiful fruit. Winter fosters the seed in the pregnant bosom of the earth. Is this harmony among the works of the earth less wonderful than that of the heavens? Are we not forced to exclaim with holy David: "How great are thy works, O



Lord ! Thou hast made all things in wisdom. The earth is filled with thy riches" ? (Ps. civ, 24.)

We pass thence to the shores of an immense ocean. What new traces of divine wisdom are discovered in its fathomless depth and in its unbounded extent, in its calms and in its tempests ! Now, quiet and undisturbed, it sets before us the image of the unalterable peace of its Creator ; then, roused into fury, it makes us tremble under the omnipotent hand which formed so awful an element ; always kept within bounds, it makes us adore the wise dispositions of divine wisdom, which has fixed the limits that cannot be passed. We see immense waves, like mountains, advance towards us ; a few grains of sand scattered on the shore stop their fury, and make them respect the order which divine wisdom has written thereon not to proceed : " Hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no farther, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves." (Job xxxviii, 11.) Ah ! exclaims the Wise Man, " the Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, hath established the heavens by prudence." (Prov. iii, 19.)

O you who refuse the tribute of your homage to the divine wisdom ! doubt it still if you can ; but before you avow your doubt, interrupt that wonderful harmony which reigns throughout creation ; extinguish the celestial lamps which shine above our heads ; forbid the night to succeed the day ; change the regulations of time, of the seasons, and of the productions of the earth ; break down the boundaries of the ocean, and moreover introduce into the universe the disorder and confusion which reign in your own heart, and then, in the wild license of your presumption, dare to ask : Is there a wise supreme Being ? But if, on the contrary, your reason cannot admit such an absurdity ; if it

compels you to acknowledge the divine wisdom in the universe, then unite your voice to that of all other creatures, and join the melodious harmony which they send forth on every side in honor of God's wisdom. The wisdom of God is, indeed, most wonderful in all his works. It is especially wonderful in the sanctification of his servants. By how many ways does he conduct them to eternal glory! Some he sanctifies on thrones, others in cottages; others in retired cells and deserts; others in various functions of an apostolic life, and in the government of his Church. And how wonderfully does he ordain and direct all human events to their spiritual advancement, both in prosperity and in adversity!

St. Ursula, when yet a tender virgin, dedicated her virginity to God. Her father, however, promised her in marriage to Conan, a Breton prince, who, by force of arms, had obtained possession of one of the fairest provinces of Gaul, now called Brittany. Ursula had to embark against her wish, in company with a great many young maidens, destined to marry the nobles and warriors among whom Conan had divided his new states. But God had accepted the vow of the saint, and he willed that she should be faithful to it until death.

The fleet which carried the virgins was cast by a storm on the northern coast, near the mouth of the Rhine, and they fell into the hands of the Huns, an idolatrous and cruel people. Gaunus, their chief, attracted by the beauty of Ursula, endeavored to make her apostatize, that he might marry her. The saint boldly declared that she was the spouse of Jesus Christ, and that she and her companions would die a thousand times rather than be unfaithful to their baptismal vows. Then the love of the barbarian

changed to hatred, and he ordered his soldiers to put them all to death. It was thus that those virgins were adorned with the double crown of virginity and martyrdom.

How admirable and adorable is the conduct of God towards his elect! He leads them by marvellous ways to their last end. In his infinite wisdom, God knows how to turn to his own purposes both the fury of the elements and of the wicked. We see it in this instance and believe it. God, in his wisdom, works for us when he seems to be against us. He is drawing near us when he seems to be afar off. He advances our affairs when he seems to have abandoned them. He enriches when he seems to impoverish us. He saves us at the moment he seems to forsake us. He gives us life when he seems to give us death. He leads us to peace by warfare; to perfection by the way of imperfection; to glory through ignominy; to the promised land through frightful deserts; to heaven by the way which seems farthest from it, and which appears to lead to hell!

“Great is our Lord, and great is his power; and of his wisdom there is no number.” (Ps. cxlvi, 5.) In all his appointments let us adore his wisdom, earnestly beseeching him that, according to the designs of his mercy, we may make every thing, especially all afflictions, serve to exercise and to improve our virtue.

### 8. What do you mean when you say God is Almighty?

*That there is no limit to his power, all things being possible with him.*

God is all-powerful; that is, he can do all things whatsoever he wills. By his word alone he has drawn forth all creatures from nothing, and he might create a thousand other worlds if he chose to do so. “He calleth,” says the

prophet, "things which are not; and even as though they did exist, do they obey his voice." There was a time when there was nothing except God himself—no sun, no stars, no earth, nothing but God. But God *spoke the word*. Then the sun shone in the heavens. The stars sparkled in the blue skies. The mountains rose up out of the earth. The rivers flowed into the great sea. The green grass grew on the earth. The beautiful flowers covered the fields. The trees spread out their branches. At his voice the fishes were swimming in the waters, the birds flying in the air, and the beasts were on the face of the earth. To God, then, nothing is difficult, nothing impossible. The celestial globes are suspended in empty space without other support or stay than his will; the sea obeys his orders, and never overflows its prescribed bounds, and all nature observes the laws which he has laid down. The fire, the wind, and the tempest obey his voice; it is he who covers the sky with clouds, and prepares there the rain which is to water the earth; and he it is, in fine, who every year presents to our admiring gaze the resurrection of entire nature. Let us, then, always adore the great Almighty God and Ruler of all things, saying: "Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of ages! Who shall not fear thee and magnify thy holy name?" (Apoc. xv.)

### 9. What do you mean when you say God is holy?

*That he loves and wills only what is good, and hates what is evil.*

God is infinite goodness itself. Hence he loves and wills only what is good. He loves, above all, his own goodness, and delights in it. Whatever he wills is good.



He willed that the world should be made; and when it was made, "God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good." (Gen. i, 31.) He loves goodness or virtue wherever he sees it; and he cannot endure iniquity: "Thy eyes are too pure to behold iniquity." (Heb. v, 13.) "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xv, 9, 26.) Hence the Wise Man says: "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike." (Wisd. xiv, 9.) Why is it that the wicked hate God? It is because they are aware that his holiness is opposed to their wickedness and condemns it: "Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity." (Ps. xlv, 8.) Why is it that God cannot unite himself to a soul in heaven so long as he sees in it the least stain of sin? It is because everything that is not quite good and perfect is essentially opposed to his divine holiness. Hence he cannot admit into heaven, to the contemplation of his divine essence, a soul that is still defiled with the least stain of sin: "No defiled thing," says St. John, "shall enter the heavenly city of Jerusalem."

Of all the perfections of God, it is especially his holiness which the blessed in heaven praise and glorify. They constantly sing: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." (Apoc. iv, 8.) It is his holiness which God wishes us to imitate. He never said to any one: "Be all-mighty, all-wise," etc.; but he says to every one: "Be holy, because I am holy." (Lev. xi, 44.) We are not merely advised, but strictly commanded, to become holy: "Be you therefore perfect," says Jesus Christ, "as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. v, 48.) "He that is holy, let him be sanctified still." (Apoc. xxii, 11.) We are holy if we know and do the will of God. The longer we do it in this world, the holier we become.

**10. What do you mean when you say God is just ?**

*That he rewards the good, and punishes the wicked, especially in the next world.*

God knows the ways of every man. His "eyes behold both the good and the evil." (Prov. xv, 8.) As he loves virtue, he rewards it wherever he sees it; and as he hates sin, he punishes it wherever he finds it. He deals with all men according to strict justice. The rewards of virtue will be exceedingly great, and the punishments of sin will be most frightful. "God," says St. Paul, "will render to every man according to his works; to them indeed who seek glory, and honor, and incorruption—eternal life; but to them who are contentious, and who obey not the truth, but give credit to iniquity—wrath and indignation. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil. . . . But glory and honor and peace to every one that worketh good. . . . For there is no respect of persons with God." (Rom. ii, 5–11.) God rewards the least good action: "Whosoever," says Jesus Christ, "shall give to drink to one of those little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." (Matt. x, 42.) As God's justice shines forth in the reward of the least good action, so, in like manner, it shines forth in the punishment of the least sin. Hence, if a soul leaves this world, and is defiled with the least venial sin, God sends that soul to purgatory to expiate it, and render satisfaction for it. The justice of God will be most apparent to all on the day of the last judgment, when God will reward the just in heaven according to the good works which they have performed on earth, and punish the wicked in hell accord-

ing to the malice and number of their sins. Let us, then, live all our days in the fear of God, who can cast both body and soul into hell.

History is full of frightful facts which daily remind us of the truth that God is just. There are few as terrible as the death of the persecutors of the Roman Catholic Church. In Volume I, Part I, from page 195 to page 213, of this work, we may read how God punished, even in this life, the crimes which those monsters of cruelty, impiety and luxury committed.

### **11. What do you mean when you say God is good ?**

*That he is infinitely desirous of giving us all possible blessings, especially himself.*

To understand, in some measure, the goodness of God, we must remember that the first person in God is called God the Father. Now, what we principally admire in a father is his great yearning to communicate himself and all his goods, as far as possible, to his children. This yearning of communicating himself and all his goods in God the Father is infinite—it is essential to his nature.

It was in the life of Jesus Christ that God the Father made the effects of his goodness for man appear in the most striking and most wonderful manner. We see these effects in the preaching of Christ, in his miracles, in his passion and death; we see them in the mission of the Holy Ghost; we see these effects in the holy sacraments, especially in that of the holy Eucharist, in which God may be said to have exhausted his omnipotence, his wisdom, and his love for man; finally, we see them in his most wonderful care for his Church in general, and for each faithful soul in particular.

Again, in the act of justification, by which God frees the soul from sin and sanctifies her, he communicates himself, not only spiritually to the soul by grace and charity and other virtues, but he also communicates himself really in giving the Holy Ghost. So that, as Jesus Christ is the Son of God by nature, we, by grace, are made children of God, our sonship bearing the greatest resemblance to the divine Sonship. Behold the great things which divine love effects! We are the sons of God; as the Holy Scripture says: "Ye are the sons of the living God." (Osee i, 10.)

This communication and overflow of God's goodness is most wonderful for five reasons:

*First.* On account of the greatness and majesty of the Lover and Giver: for who can be greater and more exalted than the Lord of heaven and earth?

*Second.* On account of the condition of those to whom he communicates himself with all his gifts. By nature they are but men, the lowest of rational beings; they are proud, ungrateful, carnal sinners, incapable of doing any good, and prone to every evil; they are mortal, corrupt creatures, doomed to become one day the food of worms. "What is man," exclaims the Psalmist, "that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii, 5.)

*Third.* This goodness of God is wonderful on account of the manifold and extraordinary gifts which he partly confers on men, and partly offers to them. These are: a rational soul, created according to God's own image and likeness; divine grace; the promise of glory; the protection of his angels; the whole visible world; and, finally, his own well-beloved Son: "For God so loved the world as to



give his only-begotten Son; that whoever believeth in him might not perish, but might have life everlasting." (John iii, 10.)

*Fourth.* This goodness of God is wonderful on account of the end for which he confers all these benefits—that is, for the happiness of man, and not for his own happiness; for God does not expect to receive any gain or advantage from man.

*Fifth.* This goodness of God is wonderful on account of the *manner* in which he communicates himself to men.

1. It is peculiar to God's infinite goodness to lower himself to what is vile and despicable, to heal what is ailing, to seek what is rejected, to exalt what is humble, and to pour out his riches where they are most needed.

2. He often communicates himself even before he is asked, as he does in what are called preventing graces, by which he moves the soul to pray for subsequent ones.

3. When asked, he always gives more than is asked. The thief on the cross asked of Jesus Christ no more than to remember him in his kingdom; but Jesus Christ answered his prayer with the words: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

4. God often lavishes his gifts on those who, as he foresees, will be ungrateful for them; nay, he lavishes them even upon the impious, upon infidels, heretics, atheists, blasphemers, and reprobates, according to what our Lord says in the Gospel: "Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you . . . that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."

Who can, after these reflections, refrain from exclaiming:

“Truly, the goodness of God is most wonderful! Who can comprehend its width, its height, its depth? It is fathomless, like the Divinity itself”?

**12. What do you mean when you say God is merciful?**

*That he offers to the sinner the grace of conversion, and forgives him if he repents.*

There is nothing more peculiar to God's nature than to be merciful and to spare. It is for this reason that God calls the sinner back from his evil ways, and receives him with joy on returning to his friendship. Sometimes God calls the sinner back to his grace by remorse of conscience; sometimes he speaks to him by a book, sometimes by a sermon, sometimes by a friend.

St. Andrew Avellinus practised law for some time. One day, whilst defending the cause of one of his clients, a lie escaped his lips. Soon after he read in Holy Scripture: “The mouth that believeth, killeth the soul.” (Wisd. i, 11.) At these words he felt touched with exceedingly great sorrow and remorse of conscience, so much so that he resolved to give up the practice of law and consecrate the remainder of his life to the service of God in the ecclesiastical state. St. Augustine, St. Ignatius, and many other saints were converted by the reading of a pious book. Thousands of sinners enter into themselves by the sermons they hear, especially at the time of a mission or a Jubilee. Others again owe their conversion to the charitable exhortations of good friends. Others again are brought back to God by a reverse of fortune. As God does not wish for the death of the sinner, but wishes that he should be converted and live, he tries various means and ways to make him leave his sinful life and return to the friendship of God.

The conversion of King Manasses is a most striking proof of this truth. Manasses was twelve years old when his father died. He succeeded him on the throne, but did not succeed to his piety and fear of the Lord. He was as impious as his father had been pious towards God and his people. He introduced again all the abominations of the Gentiles, which the Lord had extirpated from among the children of Israel; he apostatized from the Lord; he brought in again and encouraged idolatry; even in the temple of the Lord he erected an altar to Baal; he introduced into the temple of the true God such abominations as had never been heard of before, and which are too shameful to relate. To crown his impiety, he made his son pass through fire, in honor of Moloch; he used divinations, observed omens, and multiplied soothsayers to do evil before the Lord, and to provoke him. The Lord often warned him through his prophets, but in vain. At last "the Lord spoke to his prophets, saying: Because Manasses, King of Juda, hath done these wicked abominations, beyond all that the Amorrites did before him, and hath made Juda also to sin with his filthy doings, therefore, thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring evils upon Jerusalem and Juda, that whosoever shall hear of them, both his ears shall tingle. I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the weight of the house of Achab, and I will efface Jerusalem, as tables are wont to be effaced, . . . and I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies."

Manasses, instead of entering into himself, added cruelty to idolatry. He shed so much innocent blood that, to use the words of Holy Writ, "he filled Jerusalem up to the

mouth." According to Josephus, "he went so far in his contempt for God as to kill all the just of the children of Israel, not sparing even the prophets, but taking away their lives day by day, so that streams of blood were flowing through the streets of Jerusalem." Now, do you think so impious a wretch could be converted? O wonderful power of prayer! so great is thy efficacy with God, that, should a man be ever so impious and perverse, he will not fail to obtain forgiveness of the Lord if he prays for it with a sincere heart. "And the Lord," says Holy Writ, "brought upon Jerusalem the captains of the army of the King of the Assyrians, and they took Manasses and carried him, bound with chains and fetters, to Babylon. In his great distress and affliction he entered into himself, and he prayed to the Lord his God, and did penance exceedingly before the God of his fathers, and he entreated him, and he besought him earnestly; and the Lord heard his prayer, and brought him again to Jerusalem unto his kingdom." From that time forward he endeavored to serve the Lord the more fervently, the more grievously he had offended him. He abolished idolatry, destroyed the temples, altars, groves, and the high altars put up in honor of the heathenish deities, repaired the altar of Jehovah in the Temple of Jerusalem, and sacrificed upon it victims and peace-offerings, and offerings of praise, and he commanded Juda to serve the Lord, the God of Israel.

How true are those words that the Lord spoke one day to Blessed Henry Suso: "Imagine," said he to his great servant, "that the whole world was on fire, and then see how quickly a handful of straw cast into it is consumed! But I forgive a repentant sinner a thousand times quicker than a handful of straw can be burned up





in the largest fire." "Ah, yes!" exclaims the holy Curé of Ars, "all the sins ever committed are but a grain of sand beside a huge mountain, if compared with the mercy of God." Hence the Lord wishes every priest to tell poor sinners what he one day commanded his prophet to tell them for their encouragement, namely: "Say to the faint-hearted, Take courage, and fear not. If the wicked man shall do penance of all his sins, I will no longer remember his iniquities which he hath wrought. Why will ye die? Return ye and live. My children, why will you destroy yourselves, and of your own free will condemn yourselves to everlasting death? Return to me, and you shall live."

"Ah! fear not," said our Lord, one day, to St. Margaret of Cortona,—“fear not to obtain the full remission of all thy sins. Thou wilt infallibly obtain it, and thou shalt inflame others colder and more coy. I have destined thee as an example to all poor sinners, in order that they may clearly understand that I am that compassionate Father who welcomes back his most rebellious and most contumacious children; and that, if they ask my pardon, and prepare to receive my grace, they will ever find me ready to give it just as quickly as I have turned to thee.”

From the moment of our repentance, all the disorders, all the crimes of our life, no matter how black, how hideous, they may be, will be drowned, as it were, in the ocean of God's mercy, and disappear as the darkest night disappears at the rising of the sun.

**13. What do you mean when you say God is true?**

*That he can reveal nothing but truth, because he can neither deceive, nor be deceived.*

God is the first and essential truth. His knowledge extends to all things, and is infinitely perfect. He knows things only as they are, and can speak of them only as he knows them. His words, therefore, are always essentially true. "God," says Holy Scripture, "is not as man, that he should lie." (Num. xxiii, 19.) That is to say, a man may tell us a falsehood, because he is deceived in his knowledge; or he may tell us a wilful lie, because he wishes to deceive us. It is not so with God, because he is infallible truth itself, and cannot deceive us, because he is infinitely holy; nor can he be deceived, because he knows all things. Every word of the Lord, therefore, is essentially true. So that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away." (Mark xiii, 31.) To say, then, or to think, I believe this truth of faith, but I do not believe that, is as much as to think or say, I believe that God tells the truth in this point, but he tells it not in the other; it is as much as to say, God is capable of telling a lie. This is blasphemy; it is even the denial of God's existence. We must, then, have the most firm faith in all the truths which God has made known to us through the Catholic Church, although they may be altogether incomprehensible to us. The faith of St. Teresa was so firm that it seemed to her possible to convert all the heretics from their errors; and so simple, that she said the less she comprehended a mystery, the more firmly she believed it, and the more devotion it excited in her. She tasted a singular pleasure in not being able to comprehend it.

She silenced all objections to a mystery by saying : "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, has revealed it to us to be believed, not to be comprehended; and we have no more questions to ask."

#### **14. What do you mean when you say God is faithful?**

*That he keeps all his promises.*

Men often make promises which they do not keep, either because they have not the good will or the means to keep them. It is not so with God. God has the good will to keep all his promises, because his infinite goodness prompts him to make them. He also has the means to keep them, because he is all-powerful; and he is bound to keep them, because he is truth itself. How consoling is this reflection on the promises of God! How cheering! How it serves to inspire confidence, to raise our hopes; for the promises which God has made for the present and future life are exceedingly great! As to the present life, he promises us protection and victory in all our trials and temptations: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou wilt glorify me." (Ps. xlix, 15.)

After St. Theodore had been cruelly tortured in many different ways, he was at last commanded by the tyrant to stand on red-hot tiles. Finding this kind of torture almost too great to be endured, he prayed to the Lord to alleviate his sufferings; and the Lord granted him courage and strength to endure his torments until death. ("Victories of the Martyrs," by St. Alphonsus.)

God, moreover, promises us mercy and pardon in this life, if we truly repent of our sins: "On what day soever the wicked man shall turn from his wickedness, his wickedness shall not hurt him. None of the sins which he hath

committed shall be imputed to him." (Ezech. xviii.) No sooner had the good thief on the cross said to our Saviour, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" than he was forgiven, and even received the promise that he would be with him that day in paradise.

In our troubles and afflictions, God promises us relief and consolation: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi, 28.) St. Perpetua was a lady of noble family, brought up in the greatest luxury, and married to a man of high rank. She had everything to make her cling to this world, for she had not only her husband, but also a father, a mother, and two brothers, of whom she was very fond, and a little baby whom she was nursing. She was only twenty-two years of age, and was of an affectionate and timid disposition, so that she did not seem naturally well fitted to endure martyrdom with courage, or to bear the separation from her little baby and her aged parents, whom she loved so much. Although Perpetua loved Jesus, yet she could not help trembling at the thought of the tortures which she would have to suffer. When she was first thrown into prison, she was very much frightened at the darkness of the dungeon; she was half suffocated with the heat and bad air, and she was shocked at the rudeness of the soldiers, who pushed her and the other prisoners about, for she had always lived in a splendid palace, surrounded with every luxury, and had been accustomed from her childhood to be treated with respect. If, then, she shrunk from these little trials, what should she do when she was put to the torture, or when she had to face wild beasts in the amphitheatre? She was conscious of her own weakness, and at first trembled, but she knew that the heroic virtue of the



martyrs did not depend on natural courage and strength; she knew that, if she prayed to Jesus, he would give her strength to bear everything, so that the grace of God would shine out most brightly in the midst of her natural weakness. A few days after she was put to prison, she was baptized; and as she came out of the water, the Holy Ghost inspired her *to ask for patience* in all the bodily sufferings which she might be called to endure; so she began to pray very fervently, and from this time she became so calm and so joyful, that, in spite of all her own sufferings, she was able to cheer and comfort her fellow-sufferers.

In all our spiritual and temporal wants, God promises to bestow upon us whatever is necessary, provided we serve him faithfully: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice; and all these things shall be added unto you:" "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." (Matt. vi, 33; vii, 7.)

We read in Holy Scripture that Agar was wandering in the sandy deserts of Arabia with her little boy Ismael. She had with her a bottle of water for the boy, for she could find no water in the deserts. When the water in the bottle was finished, she placed the little boy under one of the trees and went a great way off from him, saying, I will not see the boy die of thirst. Then she sat down and lifted up her voice, and began to cry for the poor dying boy. Whereupon an angel of God called to Agar from heaven, and said: "What art thou doing, Agar? Fear not, *for God hath heard the voice of the boy*. Arise, take up the boy! . . . And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and went and filled the bottle, and gave the boy to drink." (Gen. xxi, 17-19.)

During one of our missions, a certain child knelt down

every night to say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys for the conversion of his father. One night, towards the end of the mission, when the child was again kneeling down and praying, the father said: "Child, what are you doing there?" "Father," replied the child, "I am praying for your conversion." At that moment the father felt touched by the grace of God. Next day he went to church, made a good confession, and was reconciled with God. Thus it was by the prayer of this good child that God was moved to bestow the grace of conversion upon his father.

Louis Veuillot, editor of *L'Univers*, in Paris, gave the following account of his conversion: "I had been brought up," he said, "in ignorance of the truth, with no respect for religion, and hating the Catholic Church. I had a little child, which was wild, passionate, and stupid. I was cross and severe to this child. Sometimes my wife used to say to me: 'Wait a little; the child will be better when it makes its first communion.' I did not believe it. However, the child began to go to catechism. From that time it became obedient, respectful, and affectionate. I thought I would go myself to hear the instructions on the catechism which had made such a wonderful change in my child. I went, and I heard truths which I had never heard before. My feelings towards the child were changed. It was not so much love as respect I began to feel for the child. I was inferior to it. It was better and wiser than I was. The week for the first communion had come. There were but five or six days remaining. One morning the child returned from Mass, and came into a room where I was alone. 'Father,' said the child, 'the day of my first communion is coming. I cannot go

to the altar without asking your blessing and forgiveness for all the faults I have committed, and the pain I have often given you. Think well of my faults, and scold me for them all, that I may commit them no more.' 'My child,' I answered, 'a father forgives everything.' The child looked at me with tears in its eyes, and threw its arms around my neck. 'Father,' said the child again, 'I have something else to ask you.' I knew well—my conscience told me—what the child was going to ask; I was afraid, and said: 'Go away now; you can ask me to-morrow.' The poor child did not know what to say, so it left me, and went sorrowfully into its own little room, where it had an altar with an image of the Blessed Virgin upon it. I felt sorry for what I had said; so I got up, and walked softly on the tips of my feet to the room-door of my child. The door was a little open; I looked at the child, it was on its knees before the Blessed Virgin, *praying with all its heart for its father.* Truly, at that moment, I knew what one must feel at the sight of an angel. I went back to my room, and leaned my head on my hands; I was ready to cry. I heard a slight sound, and raised my eyes—my child was standing before me; on its face there was fear, with firmness and love. 'Father,' said the child, 'I cannot put off till to-morrow what I have to ask you: I ask you, on the day of my first communion, to come to the holy communion along with mamma and me.' I burst into tears, and threw my arms around the child's neck, and said: 'Yes, my child, yes, this very day you shall take me by the hand and lead me to your confessor, and say, Here is father.'"—So this child obtained, by its prayer, the grace of conversion for its father.

As to the future life, God promises to reward his faithful servants with eternal happiness: "Amen I say to you, there is no man who hath left house, or lands, or kindred, for my sake and for the gospel, who shall not receive a hundred times as much, now in this time, and, in the world to come, life everlasting." (Mark x, 29.)

St. Cyril, while yet a child, became a Christian, in consequence of which he was maltreated, and finally turned out of doors, by his idolatrous father. He was led before the judge, and accused of frequently invoking the name of Jesus. The judge promised the child to bring about a reconciliation with his father, on condition that he would never more pronounce that name. The holy child replied: "I am content to be turned out of my father's house, because I shall receive a more spacious mansion in heaven; nor do I fear death, because by it I shall acquire a better life." The judge, in order to frighten Cyril, caused him to be bound and led, as it were, to the place of execution, but gave private orders to the executioner not to hurt him. The holy child was accordingly brought before a great fire and threatened to be thrown in; but being most willing to lay down his life, he was brought back to the judge, who said to him: "My child, thou hast seen the fire; cease, then, to be a Christian, that thou mayest return to thy father's house and inherit thy estates." The saint replied: "I fear neither fire nor the sword, but I desire a dwelling more magnificent, and riches more lasting, than those of my father! God will receive me. Do thou hasten to put me to death, that I may quickly go to enjoy him."

The bystanders wept to hear the child speak thus, but he observed: "You should not weep, but rather rejoice, and encourage me to suffer, in order that I may attain to the



possession of that house which I so ardently desire." Remaining constant in these sentiments, he joyfully suffered death.

"God," then, says holy David, "is faithful in all his words." (Ps. cxliv, 14.) All his promises will be fulfilled. If, however, he makes us great promises on certain conditions, it is evident that we must comply with those conditions, in order to be made worthy of the promises of the Lord. If God says, "Ask, and you shall receive," it is evident that only those receive who ask. If God says, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven," it is clear that those only are forgiven who forgive their fellow-men. If God says, "Turn to me, and I will turn to you," it is evident that the Lord will turn, that is, receive into his friendship those only who turn to him, that is, give up their sinful life.

**15. What do you mean when you say God is long-suffering?**

*That he often delays punishing the sinner, in order to give him time to repent.*

"The Lord waits," says Isaias, "that he may show mercy to you." For this reason it is that God prevents the devil from killing the sinner and dragging him into hell. He forbids the earth to open under his feet, he suffers him to breathe his air, he preserves his life often, even miraculously, amidst the greatest dangers, he delays his punishments as long as possible, that the poor ungrateful wretch may repent, and at last return to his friendship. And, when obliged to punish, when he can delay no longer, he does it with such slowness that he discharges his anger little by little, to oblige the sinner to repent of his

sins, and to arrest the arm of his vengeance. God might have destroyed the city of Jericho in one instant, yet he spent seven days in destroying it. In like manner, he might have destroyed the world by water in one moment, yet he spent forty days in this work. Why? In order that those who were destroyed might have time for doing penance, and so be saved. "I gave her" (Jezabel) "time, that she might do penance" (Apoc. ii, 21); and, "Knowest thou not that the patience and long-suffering of God lead thee to penance?" (Rom. ii, 4.)

Many there are whom their heavenly Father has been following and calling and inviting these thirty, forty, and even sixty years. In the Revelations of St. Bridget,\* we read that there was a rich man, as noble by birth as he was vile and sinful in his habits. He had given himself over, by an express compact, as a slave to the devil; and for sixty successive years had served him, leading such a life as may be imagined, and never approaching the sacraments. This prince at last came to die; and Jesus Christ, to show him mercy, appeared to St. Bridget, and commanded her to tell her confessor to go and visit him, and exhort him to confess his sins. The confessor went, and the sick man said that he was not in need of confession, as he had often approached the sacrament of penance. The priest went a second time; but the poor slave of hell persevered in his obstinate determination not to confess. Jesus again appeared to St. Bridget, and told her to request her confessor to return. He did so. On this occasion the priest said to the sick man: "I suppose you do not know who has sent me to you three times to hear your confession? It is Jesus Christ himself, for he appeared three times to his

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\*Lib. vi, c. 97.

great servant, and each time requested me, through her, to exhort you to make your confession, as he wished to show you mercy." On hearing this, the dying man was touched and began to weep. "But how can I be saved," he exclaimed,—“I who for sixty years have served the devil as his slave, and have committed innumerable sins?” “My son,” answered the priest, encouraging him, “do not doubt: if you repent of them, on the part of God I promise you pardon.” Then, gaining confidence, he said to the confessor: “Father, I looked upon myself as lost, and already despaired of salvation; but now I feel a sorrow for my sins which gives me confidence, and, since God has not yet abandoned me, I will make my confession.” And he made his confession four times on that day, with the greatest marks of sorrow, and on the following morning received communion. On the sixth day, contrite and resigned, he died. After his death, Jesus Christ again appeared to St. Bridget, and told her that the sinner was saved, that he was then in purgatory, and that she should pray for his delivery from its flames. The Lord, therefore, is a forgiving God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering and full of compassion. (Exod. xxxiv, 6.)

### 16. Why cannot we see God?

*We cannot see God, because he is a spirit who has no body.* (John iv, xxvi.)

God has no body, no figure, no color. We can neither see, know, nor comprehend him through our senses, because he is without color, sound, odor, taste. He is a light above all lights that the human eye cannot gaze on; a voice above all voices that the mortal ear cannot hear; odor above all odors that the smell cannot perceive;

sweetness above all sweetness that the tongue cannot taste ; substance above all substances that the hand cannot touch. When Holy Scripture speaks of the arms of God, of his hands, or his feet, or his eyes, or ears, its language is figurative, that we may understand God's operations or works. As long as we live in this world we cannot see God, for, were we to see him, we would die at the very sight of him. Moses said to the Lord : " Show me thy face, that I may know thee." And the Lord said to Moses : " Thou canst not see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (Exod. xxxiii, 13, 20.) We cannot look at a very bright object without our eyes being dazzled. None of us could look steadily into the sun at noon : were we to do so, we would become blind. We read in Holy Scripture that Moses once conversed with God on a mountain, and that, afterwards, when he came down to the Jews, his countenance was so radiant with light that they were unable to look upon him, and he was obliged to put a veil over his face when he spoke to them. Suppose, now, God would show himself in his divine majesty, surrounded with his heavenly glory, what eye would be able to behold his brightness ? For, if even the few rays of light which our divine Saviour suffered to beam from his face on Mount Thabor, caused his disciples, intimate and familiar as they were with him, to fall to the ground in amazement and dismay, who could bear, in its full intensity, the glory of his countenance as it appears to the eternal but insatiable gaze of the elect, and which forms the heaven of heaven itself ? Even the Blessed Virgin, the mother of God, could not see God in this world. But she and all the servants of God,—the holy patriarchs and prophets, the holy apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins, always



remembered God's presence : and to remember him constantly was for them, as it were, to behold him face to face, as much as possible ; and this remembrance preserved them from sin, and led them at last to the beatific vision of God in heaven. Let him who wishes to behold God in heaven, always walk in his presence on earth.

### 17. Is there more than one God ?

*No ; there can be but one God, because only one can be the Most High.*

“I am God,” says the Lord, “and there is no God beside ; neither is there the like to me.” (Isa. xlv, 9.) When God had made man, he manifested himself to him as the Most High Being, who is infinite in all his perfections, from whom all other things have their being, and on whom all creatures depend. From the beginning of the world, therefore, all true servants of the Lord have worshipped, served, and loved but one God.

Those men, however, who abandoned God, and lived according to their evil inclinations, were given up by God to a reprobate sense, in which they worshipped creatures as gods. God did not fail to show to those wicked people that there is no god besides himself : he showed this truth, by sending the terrible disaster of the universal deluge ; he showed it, by sending fire upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha ; he showed it, by chastising Egypt, Chanaan, and many other places, in a most frightful manner ; he showed it, by the great miracles which he wrought by his great servants,—the patriarchs and prophets, apostles, martyrs, and so many holy missionaries.

One day the great prophet, Elias, met the idolatrous King Achab, and bid him gather all the people and the prophets

of Baal to Mount Carmel, there to meet him. Ahab complied, and, when all were assembled there, Elias came, and said: "How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word. And Elias said again to the people: "I only remain a prophet of the Lord; but the prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty men. Let two bullocks be given us, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces and lay it upon wood, but put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under it. Call ye on the names of your gods, and I will call on the name of my Lord; and the god that shall answer by fire, let him be God." And all the people answering said, "A very good proposal." Then Elias said to the prophets of Baal: "Choose you one bullock and dress it first, because you are many; and call on the names of your gods, but put no fire under." And they took the bullock which he gave them, and dressed it; and they called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal! hear us!" But there was no voice, nor any that answered. The time was now come for offering sacrifice, and still there was no voice heard, nor did any one answer, nor regard them as they prayed. Elias then said to all the people, "Come ye unto me." And the people coming near unto him, he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And he took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, "Israel shall be thy name." And he built with the stones an altar to the name of the Lord; and he made a trench for water, of the breadth of two furrows round about the altar. And he laid the wood in order, and

cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it upon the wood. And he said : " Fill four buckets of water, and pour it upon the burnt-offering and upon the wood." And again he said : " Do the same the second time." And when they had done it the second time, he said : " Do the same also the third time." And they did so the third time. And the water ran round about the altar, and the trench was filled with water. And when it was now time to offer the holocaust, Elias the Prophet came near and said : " O Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel ! show this day that thou art the God of Israel, and I thy servant, and that according to thy commandment I have done all these things. Hear me, O Lord ! hear me ; that this people may learn that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart again." Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the holocaust and the wood, and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw this, they fell on their faces, and they said : " The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God." Elias thereupon took the prophets of Baal, and killed them all at the brook Cison.

Ah ! exclaims the Prophet Isaias, " the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance ; behold the islands are as a little dust. All nations are before God as if they had no being at all." (Isa. xl, 15, 17.) " O Lord ! who is like unto thee among the strong ? who is like to thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praiseworthy, doing wonders ? " (Exod. xv.)

What do we seek on earth ? Goodness ? It is in God without malice. Beauty ? It is in God without stain. Perfection ? It is in God without defect. Wisdom ? It is in God without error. Strength ? It is in God without weak-

ness. Pleasure ? It is in God without grief. Abundance ? It is in God without poverty. Glory ? It is in God without confusion. Happiness ? It is in God without misery. Peace ? It is in God without conflict and trouble. Let us give ourselves to God at all times and in every way. Why should we not be satisfied with a God who is so rich, so great, so wise, so powerful, so good, so beautiful, so holy, so perfect ? What can we find in creatures at all comparable to him who holds within himself infinite gifts and blessings ? Surely, a heart which cannot be satisfied with the possession of God, must resemble Lucifer in its pride and avarice : a heart that God cannot please must, indeed, be wicked and blind !



## THREE PERSONS IN GOD.

### 1. How many persons are there in God?

*There are three persons in God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*

Although "the Lord our God is one Lord" (5 Moses, vi, 4) in his being, yet he is three in personality; that is, there is only one God, but there are three divine persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. "No one," says Jesus Christ, "knoweth the Son but the Father; neither doth any one know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him." (Matt. xi, 27.) Now, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has revealed to us that there are three persons in God: "I," said he, "will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, the spirit of truth, that he may abide with you for ever." (John xiv, 16, 17.) And St. John the Evangelist writes: "There are three who give testimony in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." (1 John v, 7.)

Indeed, we have but to open the New Testament and we shall find there, almost on every page, not only the perfect, indivisible unity of the nature of God, but also the marked distinction of the divine persons, whom we call the Father, the Son or Word, and the Holy Ghost.

The Father begets the Son. By him he created the universe, and by him he speaks to us in Jesus Christ, (Heb. i, 2, 5); he sends him to save the world (John iii, 17); he proclaims him as his beloved Son in whom he is

well pleased (Matt. xvii, 5); he makes him the victim of propitiation for sin (1 John iv, 10); he appoints him judge of the living and the dead (John v, 22); he makes him sit at his own right hand (Heb. i, 13); he abides in him and works in him (John xvi, 10); he glorifies him (John xii, 28); he gives testimony of him (John viii, 18); from him proceeds the Holy Spirit (John xv, 26), whom he sends in the name of the Son (John xiv, 26).

The Son is spoken of as begotten (John i, 14, 18); he is the only (John i, 15) and the beloved Son (Mark i, 11); he is called the Word (John i, 1); he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the figure of his substance (Heb. i, 3); the image of the invisible God (Col. i, 15); he is made flesh (John i, 14); he becomes our surety and our advocate with the Father (1 John ii, 1); no one cometh to the Father but by him (John xiv, 6); he sends us the Holy Spirit, who proceedeth from him (John xv, 26).

The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father (John xv, 26), and receives from the Son (John xvi, 14). He teaches all truth (John xvi, 13); he reveals things to come (John xvi, 13); he speaks by the mouth of the confessors of the faith (Matt. x, 20); he searches the depths of God (1 Cor. ii, 10). He distributes his gifts as he wills (1 Cor. xii, 11); he testifies that Christ is the truth (1 John v, 6); a blasphemous word against the Holy Ghost will not be forgiven (Matt. xii, 32); he is called the Paraclete, etc.

The Evangelists relate that, at the moment when Jesus was baptized, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, descended upon him, and a voice was heard from heaven, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (John i, 32; Matt. iii, 16, 17; Mark i, 10; Luke iii, 32.) Here we

easily distinguish the three persons in God: the Father, who speaks; the Son made man, who is baptized; and the Holy Ghost, who rests upon him.

Our dear Saviour, therefore, commanded his apostles to "baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii, 19.) Since that time the Catholic Church has conferred baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, on all those who desired to become members of her. She has taught her children to sign themselves with the sign of the cross, saying: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

We conclude all our hymns and canticles with that consecrated chant, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;" and we offer all our prayers to the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son, who lives and reigns with him, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. "We worship, then," says the Church, in the Athanasian Creed, "one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal."

## 2. Why is the first person called Father?

*Because, from all eternity, he begets a Son, who is equal to him in all things, and who is called the Word, the Wisdom of God.*

The first person of the Holy Trinity is called God the Father. What we consider and admire in a father is, as has already been said, his great yearning to communicate

himself and all his goods, as far as possible, to his children. This yearning of communicating himself and all his goods in God the Father is infinite, it is essential to his nature ; for God is infinite love. Love, however, culminates in the reproduction of itself, that is, of generating its own image. The first person in God being Father, eternally begets, as such another self, who is his Son, his most perfect image. He, together with his Son, sends forth a third self, proceeding from both, who is their reciprocal love,—the Holy Ghost ; so that the one divine Essence is quite the same in each of the three divine persons. Hence it is something far greater in God to be Father than to be Lord : for, as Father, he generates his Son, who is equal to himself ; whilst, as Lord, he has created the universe, which is infinitely less than himself.

### 3. Is each one of the three persons God ?

*Yes ; the Father is true God, the Son is true God, and the Holy Ghost is true God.*

That each of the three divine persons is God, may easily be shown. The Father is God : for, if any of the three divine persons be God, the Father is so undoubtedly, because he is the origin and source of the other two. Thus, the Apostles' Creed begins with these words : " I believe in God, the Father Almighty."

The Son, or the Word, as he is called by St. John, is also God : " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made." (John i.) As the Word was in the beginning, he must necessarily be eternal as the Father ; as he is God, he is consubstantial to the Father ; as all things were made by him, he must be God,



for no one but God has the power of creating. He himself gives testimony to his being God: "I and the Father," he says, "are one." In these words he clearly expresses the quality and unity of his nature with that of his Father.

In the year 319, Arius, a priest of Alexandria, denied that the Son was God, adding that he was a creature, and made out of nothing; that there was a time when he did not exist, and that he was capable of sinning: with other such impieties. This impious doctrine was condemned in the Council of Nice, held in 325. In that council it was defined "that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born of the Father before all ages, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten and not made, *consubstantial to the Father*, and that by him all things have been made."

That the Holy Ghost, equally with the Father and the Son, is God, we learn from that passage in the Acts of the Apostles, in which St. Peter reproaches Ananias: "Why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost? . . . Thou hast not lied to man, but to God." The Holy Ghost is, then, God. He is possessed of infinite knowledge and perfection, which belong only to God; for St. Paul tells us that "the things, also, that are of God, no man knoweth but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. ii, 10.) The Father is, then, God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.

In the fourth century, Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople, attacked the divinity and the consubstantiality of the Holy Ghost. He was condemned, in the year 381, in the General Council of Constantinople. In that council, the divinity of the Holy Ghost was established, and in very explicit terms: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Lifegiver, who proceeds from the Father, who,

with the Father and the Son, is equally adored and glorified, who spoke by the prophets."

"Such," therefore, "as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. As, also, they are not three Uncreates, nor three Incomprehensibles, but one Uncreate, and one Incomprehensible. In like manner, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty. And yet they are not three Almighty, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the son God, and the Holy Ghost God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So, likewise, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord. And yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there are three Gods, or three Lords." (Athanasian Creed.)

The great St. Patrick, who was sent by the pope, four hundred years after our blessed Lord, to preach the gospel to the Irish, found them a prey to gross superstition and idolatry. In the course of his apostolic journeys, he arrived at the hill of Tara on Easter-eve, the very day on which the false priests of the country, called Druids, were performing on that sacred spot the ceremonies of their false god, Baal, in presence of King Leogaire and all his court. According to the ancient law of the country, no fire could be lighted on that day before the sacred fire of Baal had been kindled; and the Druids had warned the king that, if

this were done, the person who lighted the unlawful flame would subdue the land, and change the customs and religion of the people. St. Patrick, however, in performing the solemn office of the Church, blessed the sacred fire, as is usual on Easter-eve, and lighted the Paschal candle. The Druids, observing the strange light, came to the king in the greatest consternation, and begged that he would immediately order it to be extinguished. Thereupon the king, summoning his armed horsemen, rode in anger to the spot, but was met by St. Patrick and his attendants, who came forth in procession, singing the praises of God. The king, touched by God's grace, received him with courtesy, and granted him an audience, which took place on the following morning. At this conference, which was attended by all the chieftains and Druids of the neighborhood, St. Patrick delivered a full explanation of Catholic doctrine, which was followed by the conversion of many of his hearers, and, soon after, by that of the whole island.

It was on this occasion that St. Patrick, while instructing the people in the mystery of the blessed Trinity, gathered from the ground a sprig of shamrock, to explain to them more clearly the doctrine of Three Persons in One God. "Behold," he would say to them, "this little plant, which bears on the one stalk three small leaves, the exact copy and resemblance of one another. They are distinct and separate, yet they are one; for they form but one sprig, and rest upon one stalk. So it is, my brethren, that I preach to you a God, one in nature and three in person: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each equally God, but possessing one undivided Godhead."

Since that time, the faithful people of Ireland have loved and cherished this little plant, which their great

apostle made use of, in the conversion of their forefathers. They have never ceased to glory in it, as the fittest emblem of their country and their faith.

**4. If each one of the three persons is God, why are there not three Gods ?**

*The three persons are only one God, because in them there is but one and the same divine nature, or Godhead.*

The Father is the origin and source of the divine Personality ; himself self-existent, from him proceed the other divine persons. By his own self-knowledge he begets the Son, and communicates to him his whole divine being, or essence. The Son, then, is not less than the Father, possessing, equally with the Father, the whole fullness of the Godhead. The Father, beholding in the Son his own divine essence, of necessity loves him. In like manner the Son, beholding in the Father that same divine nature which the Father has imparted to him, of necessity loves him. Of this mutual, essential love of the Father and the Son is the Holy Ghost ; so that, as has already been said, the one and the same divine essence is quite the same in each one of the three divine persons. Hence, though each person is God, yet there is but one God.

**5. In what relation or order do these persons stand to one another ?**

*The Father is of himself from all eternity ; the Son is begotten of the Father from all eternity ; and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son from all eternity.*

“ The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone—not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is from the



Father and the Son—not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.” (Athanasian Creed.) Let it be remarked here that, although all divine perfections and all external works are common to the three persons of the most holy Trinity, yet to the Father, as the source and origin of all things, *might* is ascribed: for, to his power everything, apart from the Deity itself, is indebted for its existence. To God the Son, who is the wisdom of the Father, are ascribed all supernatural illuminations vouchsafed to men: for he is “the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.” (John i, 2.) To God the Holy Ghost are ascribed goodness, mercy and love: for he is the essential expression of the mutual love of the Father and the Son. To the love of the Holy Ghost we are indebted for being members of the Catholic Church, and being placed in a position where we receive so many graces for our salvation.

**6. Why are the Son and the Holy Ghost equal to the Father in all his infinite perfections?**

*Because, from all eternity, the Father communicates all his divine perfections to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.*

The Son is the only-begotten of the Father: in such wise, that the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son. To the Son and the Holy Ghost the Father imparts all that is possible to be imparted,—his whole divine substance, his infinite power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and so forth; so that all the divine perfections are common to each one of the three persons of the most holy Trinity. The Son, then, is not less than the Father, nor

is the Holy Ghost less than the Father; the Son and the Holy Ghost possessing, equally with the Father, the whole fulness of all the divine perfections. Wherefore the same divine adoration and worship are due to the Son and the Holy Ghost as to the Father. "In this Trinity, there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less; but the whole three persons are coeternal together and coequal. So that, in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity is to be worshipped in the Trinity, and the Trinity in the Unity. He, therefore, that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity." (Athanasian Creed.)

To sum up what has been said on the three divine persons:—There is but one only God, whose nature is one, simple, indivisible. This divine nature is in three divine persons,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three persons are perfectly alike in all things, except that the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten, and the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son. Although the operations which are performed extrinsically to the Trinity itself are common to the three persons, yet it is neither the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son only, who was made man. Finally, though the three persons are really distinct from one another, yet they are consubstantial; that is, there is only one and the same divine nature or substance in the three.

**7. Can we understand the truth that these divine persons are only one God?**

*No; but we believe this truth, because God has revealed it.*

No human mind can comprehend the union of the three persons, each truly God, in one Godhead; but this, like other mysteries of our holy religion, is revealed to us to be

believed, not to be comprehended. The word of God, who is infallible truth, and who can neither deceive nor be deceived, is the reason why we believe this and all other mysteries of our religion. To say or to think, I cannot believe such an article or such a mystery of faith, because it is too obscure, too incomprehensible, and contrary to reason, is to exhibit a lamentable lack of reason. To be a man, it is necessary to have reason. Reason is the light of man. But reason tells us that it is necessary to submit to faith, and that there is no sense in him who wishes to submit to his reason the very essential principle of his reason; and that to wish to understand what is above his intelligence is to be without intelligence.

Reason tells us that our religion would not be divine, if it were not above reason. For God would not be God, if he were not incomprehensible; and my soul could not adore him, if my mind could comprehend him. It is one thing to say that such a mystery is contrary to reason; and another, to prove it. In order to prove that a doctrine is contrary to reason, we must have a clear, precise idea of what that doctrine is. We can say, for instance, that it is contrary to reason to assert that a square is a circle; for we have a clear, precise idea of what a square is, and what is a circle. But we cannot say with certainty that a doctrine or a mystery of our holy faith is contrary to reason; for we can never have a full, clear, precise idea of that doctrine or mystery. We cannot have this clear idea, simply because those doctrines are far above reason. We cannot say that the doctrine of the holy Trinity, the doctrine of the three divine persons in one divine substance, is contrary to reason, because we can never have a clear, precise idea either of God's essence, or of the nature of

the three divine persons. And what is true of the Trinity is true also of all the other doctrines and mysteries of our holy faith. They are not against reason, but they are above reason. Reason is above the senses, and faith is above reason.

“Certainly,” says St. John Chrysostom, “since the works of God incomparably surpass the capacity of our minds, the thoughts whereby we seek to penetrate the abysses of faith are always accompanied with folly, and resemble labyrinths which it is very easy to enter, but from which it is almost impossible to come forth. These thoughts spring from pride; and as proud minds are ashamed to believe or to admit that which they cannot understand, they entangle themselves in difficulties from which they cannot easily issue. Is it true, then, proud man, that you can understand how the sun and stars were created; how the earth, with all its riches, was called forth from chaos; how the magnet attracts iron; how a single grain of corn sown in the earth produces a thousand other grains? You are not ashamed to own that you cannot answer these things; but when there is question of things of a more sublime nature, of things that are above the comprehension of angels, you will not avow your ignorance—you make bold efforts to understand them. Fool! the shame is not the inability to comprehend them, but the daring to sound them.”

“To attempt to fathom the Trinity,” says St. Bernard, “is audacity; to believe in it is piety; to confess it is life and eternal bliss.” St. Augustine, one of the greatest doctors of the Church, was walking, one day, on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. He was meditating on the mystery of the most holy Trinity, and sought to fathom it,



in order that he might be able to explain it the better in a work he was about to compose, or in sermons he might have to preach. He was absorbed in this inquiry, when he saw a little boy carrying water continually from the sea, in a small shell, and throwing it into a hole which he had made in the sand. "What is that you are doing, my little boy?" said St. Augustine. "I am trying to put all the water of the sea in this little hole." "But, my dear child, that is impossible," resumed the holy bishop, laughing heartily at the child's artless simplicity: "do you not perceive that the hole is too small, and the sea too large?" "You think, then, that I shall not succeed? Well! I can assure you it will be easier for me to put all the water of the sea into this little hole, than for you to comprehend or explain the doctrine of the holy Trinity." No sooner had the child spoken these words, than he disappeared. It was an angel who had taken that form to give St. Augustine this important lesson. The learned doctor thanked God for such a favor, and gave himself no further trouble about endeavoring to penetrate inscrutable mysteries. (St. Augustine, "Confessions.")

**8. What are those revealed truths called, which we cannot understand?**

*Those truths which God has revealed, but which we cannot understand, are called the mysteries of faith.*

The word "mystery" means a truth which we are not able to understand. Almighty God, to try our faith and obedience, proposes many things to our belief which are far above our weak, limited understanding, but which the virtue of faith teaches us to receive at once without the least doubt, because they are revealed to us by God

himself. It is, for instance, a mystery to us how God created the world in one moment out of nothing, and how God is present everywhere, whole and entire. In regard to these things, we are like little children who do not understand many things that grown-up people easily understand. In like manner, grown-up people do not understand many things which the angels understand, for the holy angels far surpass us in knowledge and understanding; so that there are many things which are not mysteries to the angels, but are mysteries to us. And those things which are, as it were, mysteries to the angels, because they have not been revealed to them, are not mysteries to God; for he sees and knows all things as they are in themselves. Mysteries, therefore, arise only from the fact that our understanding is imperfect and limited. Should we ever be so happy as to go to heaven, those things which are mysteries to us now, will be no longer mysteries; for they will be unfolded to us, and we shall see them in the light of God's presence, and this knowledge will be to us a source of unspeakable bliss and joy.

**9. What do we call the mystery of one God in three persons?**

*We call it the mystery of the holy Trinity.*

The word "Trinity" means three persons in one God. As we are not able to understand how there can be three distinct and separate persons in one Godhead, we speak of the holy Trinity as a great and sublime mystery. We call the holy Trinity *blessed*, because we ought to bless and praise God forever. Sometimes we say the *adorable* Trinity, because the one God in three persons is worthy of all our adoration. We also say the *undivided* Trinity,

because, though God exists in three distinct persons, he is not and cannot be divided. He is a *simple* being,—that is, a being not composed of parts,—who excludes, by his very nature, all mixture or composition. This mystery is one of those great truths of religion which we must know and profess, in order to be saved. Hence, before we were baptized, we were asked by the priest whether we believed in God the Father, and in God the Son, and in God the Holy Ghost; and our godfathers and godmothers, answering for us, said that we did believe. We were then baptized in the name of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of God the Holy Ghost. As all spiritual and temporal blessings come to us from the three persons of the adorable Trinity, we should entertain a great love and reverence for this blessed mystery. We should, morning and night, bow down to adore, praise, and thank the one God in three persons; and all that we do, we should perform in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The mystery of the most holy Trinity has always been honored, in a very particular manner, in the Church. All the Sundays of the year are, in some measure, consecrated to the blessed Trinity; but, in order to honor it still more specially, the Church adopted the custom of reciting very frequently, in the liturgy, the *Gloria Patri*. The learned Cardinal Bona thinks that the first part of that prayer which is called the *Little Doxology*, was composed by the apostles themselves. It is composed of the following words, which we all know by heart: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” The same learned authority informs us that it was the Council of Narbonne, in 589, that first ordained the singing of it

at the end of each psalm. The Arians and some other heretics having changed some words in the Gloria Patri to justify their errors, the General Council of Nice, held in 325, added to it the words which form the second part, namely : "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." As often as this beautiful prayer is repeated, it is a pretty general custom to bow the head, as if to honor and salute more particularly the three divine persons. (Pascal, "*Origine et Raison de la Liturgie Catholique*," 507.)

We read in the life of St. Barbara, Virgin and Martyr, that she always had a great love and reverence for the blessed Trinity. Her father was a pagan ; and as she would never give up her Christian religion to please him, he had her shut up in a high unfinished tower, and then set out on a distant journey. St. Barbara, having remarked that there were only two windows in the apartment intended for her, prevailed on the workmen to put in a third, because it was her intention to consecrate them to the three divine persons. When her father returned, and saw that his plan had not been carried out, and, moreover, that Barbara was the cause of the alteration, he became furious. But his rage increased still more when he found that his daughter was as firm in her faith as before. Maddened by this conviction, he threw himself on the youthful virgin, who ceased not to invoke the blessed Trinity, and ran her through with a sword he held in his hand. This was in 306. Thus this holy virgin died a martyr for the sake of the blessed Trinity. (St. John Damascene.)



## THE WORKS OF GOD.

### I.—CREATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

#### 1. Why is God called the Creator of heaven and earth?

*God is called Creator of heaven and earth, because, by his word, he made heaven and earth out of nothing.*

The word "Creator" means one who can produce something out of nothing. The most skilful workman is not able to create anything; he can only give a certain new form to such things as already exist. Man needs stones, mortar, and lumber, to build a house; silver and brass, to make a watch. Physicians, mechanics, chemists, nay, even jugglers, make some surprising things, which suppose superior genius; but they do not make these things of nothing: they must have tools, instruments, substances, wherewith they may work. The most curious thing that was ever made was probably Vaucanson's duck. That famous mechanic amused himself with making a little duck, in which he concealed a great number of very fine springs, most skilfully disposed. When he had finished, people came from all parts to admire his automaton. The duck was thrown into the water, and every one could see it swim by itself, open its wings, shake them briskly, pick up grain with its bill, swallow, digest and pass it out, just as a live duck would do. We may suppose that the spectators were all amazed; they clapped their hands, and felicitated Vaucanson on his wonderful genius. And yet, what is that to the works of God, who, by a single act of his all-powerful will, created all this vast universe out of nothing? He made heaven, that beautiful place where the angels and saints dwell. He made the sky above, and

all the bright heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon and the stars. He also made the earth where we dwell, clothed it with beautiful flowers, trees, and all kinds of plants, and filled it with so many various animals. To enable us to form some great idea of God's power of drawing the universe out of nothing, let us remember that, although this world of ours is only one of a vast system of planets, yet it is twenty-seven thousand miles in circumference, and it would take two years and a half to traverse it completely, at the rate of thirty miles a day.

The sun, being nearly three millions of miles in circumference, could not be traversed, at the same rate of speed, in less than two hundred and seventy-four years; yet this sun, so immeasurably greater than our universe, is supposed to be immeasurably less than certain of the fixed stars. Let us reflect, again, that the sun is distant from us at least ninety-five millions of miles. It is impossible to conceive in the mind so vast a space. Yet there are planets twenty times farther removed from us than the sun; and even their distance is nothing, humanly speaking, in comparison with that of the fixed stars. The light of some of those stars, according to the opinion of astronomers, has not yet reached us, although it has been travelling towards us at the rate of twelve millions of miles a minute since the creation of the world. And each of those stars is the centre of a planetary system vastly greater than our own. Now, those millions of worlds that bewilder calculation, or even conception, were created by God out of nothing: "He spoke, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created." (Ps. cviii, 5.)

There have been, and there are still, men who have impiously asserted that the world made itself, or was made

by chance, or is eternal, or is but one substance which is called God—that all other things are but different modifications of God. The folly and absurdities of those impious men are evident even to the dumbest minds. How could the world make itself, or have existence, unless it had it from another? Or how could this vast and beautiful universe, those grand, magnificent heavenly bodies, the countless living animals, and man himself, have been made by chance, which is nothing? Did chance ever make the spring and wheels of a watch, put them together, and make them tell the time? Or did chance ever build a house and furnish it? If, then, it requires an intelligent being, that is, a being capable of thinking and knowing, to make a watch or build a house, how much more does it require an almighty and all-wise Being to make this vast universe and all that it contains?

There are also many convincing proofs to show that the world is not eternal, but had a beginning: for we know from history the origin of families, of kingdoms, of nations; we know the period at which the earth began to be peopled. So that, according to history, the origin of the world cannot be traced farther back than six thousand years, as related by Moses in Holy Scripture. The impiety of those who have made such foolish assertions concerning the existence of the world, has been solemnly torn down by the Vatican Council: "If any one," say the fathers of that council, "confess not that the world and all things, both spiritual and material, which are contained in it, have, in their whole substance, been produced by God out of nothing. . . let him be anathema." (Canon 5: Of God, the Creator of all things.)

But nothing is more absurd and more impious than the

assertion that the world is but one substance which is called God, and that all other things are but modifications of that God. Those who make this assertion are called pantheists. If all things in the world are but modifications of that one substance called God, they must, of course, adhere to that substance as to their subject. Hence, if a man is sick, a portion of the Divinity is sick; and if another man is well, that portion of the Divinity is well. What folly greater than this! Assuredly, if the philosopher is not governed by the power of religion, his conduct will be absurd and even despicable to the most ignorant individual of the lowest rank. The venerable Father Clement Hofbauer, C. SS R., possessed great power of attracting the young and the intellectual. Several of his confrères and pupils who were leading holy lives under his guidance, spoke to him about Professor Madlener, of the university of Vienna, who was known to be a pantheist. "Father," they said, "he is a splendid man, so kind and so intellectual. O! if you could only catch him!" Hearing that Madlener was sick, Father Clement presented himself at his bedside. But he was not a welcome guest. As he could do nothing with the ungracious invalid, he took up a piece of chalk and wrote on the foot-board of the bed, "A portion of the divinity is sick." The reflections drawn from this absurd announcement led to the conversion of Professor Madlener. He became a most fervent Redemptorist Father. (Life of the Venerable Clement Hofbauer.) The impiety of the pantheists has been condemned by the fathers of the Vatican Council, in the following words: "If any one shall say that the substance and the essence of God and of all things are one and the same; or if any one shall say that finite things both corporeal and spiritual, or, at



least, spiritual, have emanated from the divine substance ; or that the divine essence, by the manifestation and evolution of itself, becomes all things ; or, lastly, that God is a universal or indefinite being, which, by determining itself, constitutes the universality of things, distinct according to genera, species, and individuals,—let him be anathema.”

## 2. In how many days did God create the world ?

*God created the world in six days, or periods of time.*  
(Gen. i.)

God is infinite in power. He could, then, have created all things in one single instant. He chose, however, six days to put into order the whole work of creation. He first created at once all the matter of which the world is composed,—and this is creation, properly so called,—and afterwards he was employed six days in arranging that vast matter, and in forming from it the different kinds of material creatures of which the world is composed. No doubt, God can do as easily one thing as another, because he is all-powerful ; in itself, however, it is far easier to arrange matter, already existing, than to draw it from nothing. If God, then, in one single instant, did that which is most difficult, and was employed six days in doing that which is less difficult, it follows that he wished to teach us that, in arranging the whole universe, he acted neither through impotence nor through weakness, neither through constraint nor through necessity, but only as it pleased and when it pleased him. Hence the fathers of the Vatican Council teach : “ If any one shall say that God created, not by his will, free from all necessity, but by a necessity equal to the necessity whereby he loves himself, let him be anathema.”

No one can tell the number of years which have elapsed

since that moment when God at once created all the matter of which the world is composed. We are told in Holy Scripture that, "in the beginning, God created heaven and earth." By these words, "in the beginning," we are to understand an indefinite period prior to that time in which the earth, created in the beginning of things, was arranged in order. By these words, "in the beginning," then, is not meant the beginning of the first day, but the beginning of time. Before the first creation time did not exist—it only began to exist from the moment that God created heaven and earth; that is, drew from nothing the materials of the universe, that immense quantity of matter which his divine power unfolded, and from which he arranged, both the earth on which we dwell, and all the heavenly bodies. But that immense quantity of matter was but a vast chaos. "The earth," says Holy Scripture, "was void and empty (that is, invisible and without shape or form); darkness was spread over the face of the abyss, and the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters." (Gen. i.) This chaos, this immense mass of matter, is to receive, under the hand of Almighty God, various forms in succession.

This is the explanation, too, given by St. Augustine. "Heaven and earth," he says, "are here called *materia prima* (the first *material*), from the fact that from it heaven on the second day, and the earth on the third day, were to be formed." (Lib. i, De Gen. contra Manich., c. vii.) And again: "That rude matter which God made out of nothing was called at first heaven and earth, not because these already existed, but because they *could* be; for heaven and earth are described as being made afterwards: just as if, in considering the seed of a tree, we should say that the roots are there, and also the trunk and the leaves, and the fruit

and the branches,—not that they already exist, but because thence they will spring.” (Lib. i, De Gen. ad. lit., c. xiv.) By *heaven* is meant the first crude matter, out of which God, on the second day, formed the highest heaven,—the empyrean, called by St. Paul the heaven of heavens, the abode of the blessed. And this is the opinion of Venerable Bede, and St. Basil and St. Thomas. The creation, then, detailed in the first chapter of Genesis, beginning with the so-called creation of light, is the bringing of order out of confusion, and the peopling of a world which was before unpeopled.

On the first day, God converted a large portion into luminous matter, and separated this luminous matter from that which was not so: “Let there be light, and there was light.” The light here spoken of was not the light of the sun. The most learned men admit as certain that luminous matter exists quite independent of luminous bodies. This luminous matter, they say, is a certain fluid called ether, which extends through space, and surrounds and penetrates all bodies. When this ether is made to vibrate, a succession of undulations in its substance follows and produces light. This view of the subject is confirmed by the recent experiments made by Young, Arago, Fresnel, and others. And “God saw that the light was good,” that is, suited the purpose for which he had produced it, “and he separated the light from the darkness. He called the light Day, and the darkness Night. And there was evening and morning one day.” (Gen.)

On the second day, God formed the terrestrial atmosphere, or the aerial region, which, on account of its apparent proximity to the starry region, received the name of heaven, or firmament. In this region he caused a great mass of water to ascend in the form of clouds, and the other portion

of watery matter remained mixed with the earthy matter. This we are told in these words of Holy Scripture: "And God said: Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made a firmament, and divided the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven; and the evening and the morning were the second day." This second day consisted, as well as the first, of a time of darkness, and of a time of light.

On the third day, God made the waters on the earth gather into one place, in order that the earth might become visible. All on a sudden, the waters collected in one place, and the dry land appeared. This great collection of water God called seas. The earth being separated from the water, it now becomes at once fruitful in all kinds of plants, flowers, trees, etc., which possess the property of bearing seeds, in order to propagate and multiply their species. This we are told in the following words of Holy Scripture: "God also said: Let the waters that are under the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear. And it was done so. And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters he called seas. And God saw that it was good. And he said: Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after its kind, which may have seed in itself upon the earth. And it was so done. And the earth brought forth the green herb, and such as yieldeth seed according to its kind, and the tree that beareth fruit, having seed each one according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day." (Gen. i, 9-13.)



On the fourth day, God formed the sun, the moon, the planets, the comets, the stars and all the heavenly bodies, from the materials which had existed since the first day of creation. God formed these materials into globes of different kinds and of various sizes. He placed them at certain distances from one another, and gave each one of them its peculiar movement. "And God said: Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. To shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth. And it was so done. And God made two great lights: a greater light to rule the day; and a lesser light to rule the night: and the stars. And he set them in the firmament of heaven to shine upon the earth, and to rule the day and the night, and to divide the light and the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day."

On the fifth day, God formed and gave life to the different kinds of fishes, and to all the various sorts of birds. God also said: "Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life, and the fowl that may fly over the earth under the firmament of heaven. . . . And God saw that it was good, and he blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the waters of the sea; and let the birds be multiplied on the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day." (Gen. i, 20-22.)

In the first part of the sixth day, God ordered that every kind of living animals should come forth from the substance of the earth; and at the command of God living animals of every kind came forth from the earth. God said: "Let the earth bring forth the living creature in its

kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth, according to their kinds. And it was so done. And God made the beasts of the earth, according to their kinds, and cattle, and everything that creepeth on the earth, after its kind. And God saw that it was good." (Gen. i, 24, 25.) If it required an infinite intelligence and an infinite power to bestow on different vegetable substances that ineffable form and organization which we so much admire, how much more must an infinite intelligence be required to conceive and put into operation the still more admirable mechanism which we observe in the different kinds of animals which inhabit the earth, the air, and the waters!

In the second part of the sixth day, God formed and created man to be the king of the earth. "Again, God said: Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth. . . . And God created man to his own image: male and female he created them. And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth. . . . And God saw all the things he made, and they were very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. So the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the furniture of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work, which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done." (Gen. i, ii.)

This short account of the creation of the world and of man was faithfully preserved in the memory of man, owing to the long lives of the patriarchs, who transmitted

to their posterity, for many ages, the account of whatever interesting events they had either witnessed themselves, or heard from their fathers. This tradition Moses committed to writing, assisted by the Spirit of God. The account which Moses has given us of the creation of the world has been confirmed by many geological observations.

M. Barraude, quoted by M. Nicolas, gives the following key to the science of geology, and we find the sacred historian in wonderful harmony with it:—

*Quaternary or Historic Strata.*

<i>Tertiary.</i>	{	Post-pliocene, alluvium . . . .	{	Period of man.
		Pliocene, diluvium.		Bony taverns, erratic blocks.
		Miocene . . . .		Terrestrial mammals.
		Eocene . . . .		Marine mammals. Skeletons of birds.
<i>Secondary.</i>	{	Chalk . . . .	{	No terrestrial animal.
		Oölite . . . .		Abundance of large marine reptiles.
		Lias . . . .		Marine reptiles.
		Trias, new red sandstone. . .		Traces of birds, and bones of birds, recently discovered.
<i>Primary.</i>	{	Parmian . . . .	{	Fishes.
		Carboniferus . .		Insects.
		Devonian, old red sandstone . .		Considerable terrestrial vegetation.
				Oldest fishes.
		Silurian . . . .		Terrestrial plants of the moss family; rare molluscs; trilobites in large numbers
		Cambrian, the oldest fossil beds .		Marine vegetables.
<i>Primitive Strata</i> . . . . .		{	Inanimate nature, purely mineral.	

In the above table we find the exact order of the Mosaic cosmogony : first, vegetable life, then animal life in progressive order,—fishes, insects, reptiles, birds, quadrupeds. We may easily convince ourselves of this, by a careful comparison of the words of Moses with the established facts of geology.

Moses tells us, "In the beginning the earth was void and empty." From geological observations the primary soil, or the inferior layers of the earth, present everywhere the character of a crystallized deposit. Crystallization necessarily supposes that the materials thus deposited were previously in a fluid state. Again, at that period the earth was void, and altogether empty, or without vegetation—a conclusion in accordance with the account given by Moses.

"On the third day," according to Genesis, "God gathered together into one place the waters that covered the earth, and he formed the green herb and the fruit-tree." In geology, it is this exactly which the intermediate bed of earth laid over the primary indicates. It is principally characterized by vegetable remains, the first appearance on the earth of organic beings—a conclusion in conformity with the account given by Moses.

"On the fifth day," according to Genesis, "God created the living and moving creatures which the waters brought forth, and the birds that fly over the earth, under the firmament of heaven." According to geology, the upper part or surface of the intermediate layer, and the secondary beds of earth, contain only vegetable remains, marine creatures, and some traces of birds. And this is again in accordance with Moses' account. "On the sixth day," according to Genesis, "God created the terrestrial animals."



From geological observations, the tertiary beds of earth, lying on the secondary beds, are marked by the remains of those new classes of animals which are not to be found in the under formations. The creation of man concludes the work of the creation; and from geological observations the upper layers alone contain human bones, and the remains of man's work: and this is just in conformity with the account given by Moses.

We have, then, here a statement by Moses, that the vegetable kingdom was the first in the order of creation of living things, the work of the third day. And, moreover, he uses these different words to express the gradation of vegetable life, germen, herba, arbor: the first indicating the simplest form of vegetable life,—*the cellular plants*; the second, the more complicated organizations known generally by the name of *herbs*; and the third, *trees*. Plants necessarily made their appearance before the animals, for these receive from vegetables the aliments necessary for their support.

According to the Mosaic account, then, we have, first, the creation of marine vegetation, then that of terrestrial, herbs and trees; and in looking at the table above given, we shall see that this corresponds exactly with the discoveries of geologists.

Now, if it is asked, "What time has elapsed since God created the world?" we cannot know with certainty how many years have passed away since God began the work of creation; but, since he finished that work, that is, from the creation of man, we can count nearly six thousand years. Holy Scripture tells us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; that, in that early creation, there was no order, but, on the contrary, a vast

chaos, an immense abyss, over which the Spirit of God moved, but it does not tell us how long it pleased God to leave the element in that state. The Scripture also tells us that afterwards God arranged his work in order, and was employed six days in perfecting it. But were those days just as long as our days, or were they indefinite periods of time? St. Augustine says: "We should not hastily pronounce on the nature of the six days of creation, nor assert that they were similar to our ordinary days." (Gen. B. iv, No. 44.)

One cannot but admit, it seems, the clear proofs given by geologists of the fact that whole generations of different orders of vegetable and animal creatures have lived and died on this earth, and have their remains buried in its layers before man was created. Hence many of the learned say that the terms, "morning and evening," are to be understood as including long periods of time, as the theory of the six days of creation being six periods of indefinite length seems to be the only one which harmonizes the Scripture narrative with geological facts.

The word *day* (iom) is often used in Scripture in the sense of *period* (Gen. ii, 17; Ex. x, 18; xxxii, 34; Isa. xi, 16; and especially, Gen. ii, 4). In the Mosaic account of the creation especially, the word *day* must have an indefinite sense, as being not the *day* of man, but the *day* of God, with whom one day is as a thousand years. It must be granted that, in the Mosaic account of the creation, the word *day* has the same sense for the six days of the creation, and that the first, second, or third days are not different sorts of days,—in a word, that those days are similar, since the terms which Moses uses are identical. So much is clear. Now, it was only on the fourth day that

the luminaries were formed, in order that they might "divide the day and the night," and "be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years." The three preceding days were not days that had their morning and evening, their separation of day and night, since the luminaries which make these divisions did not yet exist. It is impossible to understand these first three days as meaning literally, "And there was morning and there was evening, one day." How, then, are we to understand them, unless as meaning, "And of the beginning and of the end was composed the first epoch," or, as Moses says, "the first generation"?

But, if we are obliged so to understand the first three days, we can hardly escape the conclusion that we must so understand the other three, and that the six days being, as we have seen, similar, are not six days, but six epochs of undetermined duration. St. Augustine, St. Athanasius, Origen, St. Thomas of Aquin, and Bossuet, favor this interpretation.

Moreover, according to the narrative of Moses, each of the six days lasted "from the evening to the morning." Now, it is not mentioned that the seventh day ended at the morning of another. And this seventh day still lasts, according to the belief of the fathers of the Church; it has lasted for nearly six thousand years, and will only end from the evening of time to the morning of eternity; or, rather, it will never end, but become one with the eternal day. Now, as the first, second, third, and seventh days of Genesis were not considered by the author of Genesis as ordinary days, it is difficult for any one to maintain that he did consider as such the fourth, fifth and sixth days.

This theory is allowed by the Church to be taught in her universities.

If we ask why the Church has allowed this full liberty of discussion, St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, gives the following reply: "In matters of faith we must make a twofold distinction. There are certain things which, in themselves, belong to the substance of faith, such as, that God is Three, and One, and the like, in which no one is allowed to think differently; and some things there are which belong only accidentally to the faith, inasmuch as they are found in Scripture, which faith teaches to have been promulgated at the dictation of the Holy Ghost; and these, indeed, may without danger be unknown to those who are not obliged to know Scripture, such, for instance, as many points of history: and even on these points the saints have differed, giving various explanations of the divine Scripture.

Thus, with regard to the origin of the world, there is something which belongs to the substance of faith, viz., that the world came into being by the creative act of God, and in this all the saints agree; but as to the particular mode and order in which it was made, this belongs but accidentally to the faith, inasmuch as it is contained in Scripture, keeping to the truth of which, the saints have given various interpretations. (In 2dm. Sent. Dist. xii, a. 2.)

The system of those, however, who consider the six days of creation as ordinary days, and who maintain that the arrangement of the universe took place in those six days, seems to appear more in conformity with the literal meaning of the words of Genesis: "Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy works, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. . . . For in six days



the Lord made heaven and earth and the sea, and all the things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." (Ex. xx, 9-11.) If the Sabbath-day, then, be a natural day of twenty-four hours, the other six days of creation must be considered so, too, and not as unlimited periods; for no distinction is made between the days of the creation and the Sabbath-day. To this opinion the following reply is made:—To be his imitator, God, indeed, commanded man to work during six periods (days), and to rest on the seventh. But the divine periods may have been very great—the human periods very small. Man's imitation of God should be a miniature one. "Be ye perfect," says our Lord in the Gospel, "as your heavenly Father is perfect:" in which words our Lord does not mean to say that we should attempt to be as perfect as his Father, which is impossible; but that we should imitate his perfections as much as possible.

As the holy Catholic Church has not pronounced anything with regard to this matter, one may, without censure, believe that those six days of creation were indefinite periods of time, or natural days like ours.

We do not profess to be able to understand all the difficulties which may be raised. We are not bound to give an account of all difficulties in Scripture any more than in revelation, or in revelation any more than in science. We are not ashamed to say with St. Augustine: "Let us believe and immovably affirm that in Scripture falsehood has no place."

We neither derive our religion from the Scriptures, nor does it depend upon them. Our religion was in the world before the New Testament was written.

This faith teaches us that God did not place us in this world to seek and find our happiness in understanding everything in nature, much less in understanding things that are above our understanding. We are to believe that the Catholic Church is divinely established, and that we are saved by believing her. After death, we shall see that we were great fools for losing so much time in troubling ourselves about ever so many useless things,—a time which was given us for better and more meritorious purposes.

From the words, "God rested," we are not to conclude that God was tired and needed rest. The meaning of these words is that, after having made nature to pass through six successive labors, which brought it to the time when man took possession of it, he stopped the whole *series*. He blessed it, and sanctified it, and stamped it with that solemn regularity, that invariable harmony even in its variety, that calm, that order, that profound repose, which has marked its course for six thousand years, and which is the image of the unutterable peace and repose which reign in the bosom of its Author.

### **3. Why did God create the world ?**

*God created the world to make known his goodness, by communicating to creatures the riches of his bounty.*

To explain this great truth, I shall have recourse to the following parable. There was once a celebrated architect, who built a most magnificent palace. When the costly edifice was completed, he gave it to good people for their dwelling. But they soon behaved badly and were a scandal to all their neighbors, who often said to one another: "Why was so splendid a palace built for such wicked

people?" At last the king and the queen arrived, and took possession of the palace. They forgave the servants for their bad behavior, and tried to make them good again. Then the people said: "Now we understand why this magnificent building was erected: it was for the king and the queen." The architect in this parable is God the Father. He built a magnificent palace—the world. He put into it Adam and Eve. They soon behaved badly, and now it was said by the angels: "Why was so splendid a palace, the world, created for these wicked people?" At last, the king and the queen arrived, that is, Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, his Mother. They pardoned the servants and tried to make them good again, and the angels exclaimed: "Now we understand why this great and splendid palace, the world, was created: it was for Jesus Christ and his Mother—the king and the queen of the world."

God decreed from all eternity to create the world as a dwelling-place for men, where he wished to manifest to them his goodness by communicating to them the riches of his bounty. But they were to make themselves worthy of those riches by leading a holy life,—a life of obedience to his will. But God foresaw from all eternity that men would not live according to the end of their creation. God, then, would have been frustrated in his design of creating the world and men, had he not decreed, from all eternity, the incarnation of his Son, and, consequently, the creation of his Mother, for the redemption of men. It was then principally for the sake of the Redeemer and his Mother that the world was created, for they were to come into this world for man's justification and glorification, which were to be operated through Jesus Christ and

his Mother: "For the order of nature," says St. Thomas, "was created and established for the order of grace." The principal end of the creation of the universe, I say, is Christ, his Mother, and the elect, in order that the elect may receive the grace and glory of God here below through Christ and his Mother. Although it be true that Christ and the Blessed Virgin are, so to speak, certain parts of this world, which is prior to them in material existence, yet, if considered in their final end, they are prior to the world. For this reason, St. Paul calls Jesus Christ, "the beginning, the *first-born from the dead*, that in all things he may hold the primacy. Because in him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of the cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven." (Col. i, 18-20.)

In like manner, the holy Church applies to the Blessed Virgin the words of Holy Scripture: "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first-born of all creatures. I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth." (Ecclus. xxiv, 5, 6.) She gave to the world that never-failing light,—Christ, the Sun of Justice, and through him the light of faith: "And he that made me rested in my tabernacle." (Ibid. xxiv, 12.)

There is, then, a certain mutual dependence between the creation of the world, and the nativity of Christ and the Blessed Virgin. For God did not wish that Christ and the Blessed Virgin should be born except in this world; and again, he did not wish that this world should exist without Jesus Christ and his Mother: nay, it was on their account principally that he created it. They being, then, the final reason for the creation of the universe.



God also wished that all men should be dependent on them. He decreed to institute through them the order of grace ; that is, he decreed that, through Jesus Christ and his Mother, men should receive in this world all kinds of spiritual and temporal blessings, should be rendered holy here below, and enjoy God's own happiness in heaven.

Let us look around us in the world ; let us look up to the heavens. There we behold the sun, the moon, the twinkling stars. God the Father has made them all for us, to give us heat and light. Let us look around us upon the earth, with its snowcapped mountains, its tangled forests, its smiling meadows, and let us remember that *God the Father* has made all these beautiful things for love of us, for our own use and benefit. Let us look upon ourselves, our body and our soul. God has given us a being far superior to all that we can see in nature. He has given us a soul that can never die ; he has made us like himself, free, intelligent, immortal. But, more than all this, God the Father gave us his only-begotten Son in the manger of Bethlehem, and upon the cross. *God the Son* gives himself to us at each holy Mass, and in each holy communion ; and *God the Holy Ghost* gives himself in baptism, in confirmation, and whenever we receive a sacrament worthily. God has also prepared for us a heaven where we may reign with him as kings and queens, in never-ending happiness, in the brightness of his eternal glory ; for he has promised even to give himself to us as our exceeding great reward. "God," exclaims St. Augustine, "has given the earth ; he has given heaven ; he has given his kingdom ; he has given himself : what more has he to give ? Allow me to say it : How prodigal art thou of thyself !" Let us ther always look upon all we have and are as so many blessings

which the goodness of God has bestowed upon us, that we may become more and more worthy of all kinds of spiritual and temporal benefits.

#### 4. How long will this world last?

*The world will last as long as God is pleased to preserve and to govern it. The day of its destruction is known to God alone.*

The world in which we live is the temple of God. The earth, with all its thousands of flowers, forms the carpeted floor. The blue sky above, with its millions of twinkling stars, is the vaulted dome. God created this temple for man, in order that man might worship him therein as the Lord of heaven and earth, and do his holy will in all things. God will preserve this temple as long as men are faithful to him. But this temple is of no use as soon as man ceases to worship God, and refuses to obey him. About four thousand years ago all men, except Noe and his family, had fallen away from God; God then drowned the world in the universal deluge. A time will come when all men, with the exception of a small number, will abandon God and follow their evil inclinations. It is then that God will destroy the world as a useless building. But when will that destruction take place? We know, for certain, that "heaven and earth shall pass. . . . But of that day and hour no one knoweth, no, not the angels, but the Father alone." (Matt. xxiv, 36.) When God intends to do something extraordinary, he generally prepares men for it by revealing to them beforehand what he is about to do. Thus we know that, when he intended to destroy the world by the deluge, he made it known through Noe a hundred years before this dreadful event

took place. Again, when the Son of God had become man, and was about to make himself known as the Redeemer of the world, he sent St. John the Baptist to prepare the people for his coming. When he intended to destroy Jerusalem, he foretold its destruction, by the prophets. Jesus Christ has also described the signs by which men may know when the end of the world is at hand. God acts thus with men, because he does not wish to overwhelm them by his strange and wonderful dealings. One of those signs which will precede the end of the world is the universal apostasy from the faith and from the obedience to the pope, into which, according to St. Paul, Christians will fall. (1 Tim. iv, 1 ; 2 Thess. ii, 3.) Another sign will be the coming of Antichrist, who will come during that great apostasy from the faith. Another sign will be the coming of Henoah and Elias, who are still alive. They will come at the time of Antichrist to preach to the faithful, especially to the Jews, to convert them. As apostasy from the faith is daily becoming more and more general, there can be no doubt that the end of the world is approaching very fast. Let us always bear in mind that, if we are not fervent Catholics, we occupy this world in vain ; and God will cast us out of it into hell, as he cast the rebellious angels out of heaven into everlasting torments.

### 5. How does God preserve the world ?

*God preserves the world by the same power of his will with which he created it.*

We have seen that God in the beginning created the crude mass out of which he formed, in six days, heaven and earth. Whatever, in those six days of creation, was

ordered by his all-powerful will to take place, was ordered at the same time, and by the same act of his will, to continue so to the end of time. When he ordered light to separate from the darkness, he willed, at the same time, that night and day should continue their constant succession to the end of time. When he ordered the waters to gather together in their allotted place, he willed, at the same time, that they should stay there to the end of time. When he commanded the earth to be clad with verdure, and the trees to bring forth fruit, he willed, at the same time, that this should be so to the end of the world; and every creature forthwith acted in obedience to the divine summons, the promptness and fulness of which obedience will be seen to the end of the world. Behold, God commanded the sea not to overflow its bounds; and it has ever since reverently kept itself within the limits marked out by its Creator! God commanded the sun, the moon, and the stars to rise and set regularly, and keep in their path; and they have ever since done so. God commanded the earth to produce every variety of trees and plants, and every kind of fruit and grain; and the earth has ever since continued to do so.

It is, then, by that same powerful act of God's will by which the world was drawn from nothing into existence, that it has continued and will continue to exist to the end of time. "God," says St. Paul, "upholds all things by the word of his power." (Heb. i, 3.) "And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good" (Gen. i, 34),—so good as to remain good to the end of time.



## 6. How does God govern the world?

*God governs the material world, and all irrational creatures, according to the laws of his omnipotence and wisdom; but he governs all rational creatures according to the laws of his goodness and justice.*

God created the world, and, in order to preserve and govern it, he has placed in nature certain powers, he has laid down certain laws. All irrational creatures obey these laws of God's wisdom and power, and it is thus that God governs them, according to what the Wise Man says: "God, with a certain law and compass, enclosed the depth; he compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters, that they should not pass their limits." (Prov. viii, 27-30.)

But as to all rational creatures,—angels and men, God wishes to govern them by the laws of his goodness and justice. The law of God's goodness for man is that man shall always glorify God by doing his holy will, and thus become, as it were, one with God, by partaking of his perfections, of his peace, and of his joy here below, and far more so in heaven. The law of God's justice for man is, that, if man refuses to do God's will on earth, he shall, for all eternity, be subjected to the torments which God's justice has decreed for all rebellious creatures. Man, then, being endowed as he is with free will, is left free to make a right use of the noble gift of his liberty, or to abuse it—to lift up his head and say, "I will not serve," I will not render obedience to the commands of the Most High. He, therefore, who shall not glorify in heaven God's infinite goodness bestowed on the good use of the free will, shall glorify God's infinite justice in hell, merited by the abuse of this same free will. "All irrational creatures," says

St. Jerome, "show a sense of their Maker, by ever holding themselves in readiness to obey the laws and commands of God ; for, though many of them be wanting in life and feeling, they still have an instinct which impels them to do the will of him who made them." (Lib. i, in cap. viii, Matt.) Man alone, gifted with reason, can be found to show more want of reason than beings which are deprived of reason and feeling, by withdrawing from submission to God's holy will. What monstrosity can ever equal this ? "See, then," exclaims St. Paul, "the goodness and the severity of God : towards them, indeed, that are fallen, the severity ; but towards thee, the goodness of God, if thou abide in goodness." (Rom. xi, 22.)

**7. If God governs all things according to his will, does he also will the evil of this world ?**

*No ; God wills no evil, but he permits it : 1, in order not to interfere with the free will of man ; 2, to manifest his wisdom, by drawing good from evil.*

1. All things that happen in this world, except sin, happen by the order and will of God. God is neither the cause nor the author of sin ; for, as it is against the nature of fire to cool, and of light to darken, so, also, it is far more repugnant to the infinite holiness and goodness of God to love evil, or to be the cause of it. "Thy eyes are pure, O Lord !" says the Prophet Habacuc ; "thou canst not look upon evils, nor behold iniquity." (i, 13.) To express our aversion for a thing, we say, "I cannot bear the sight of it." In like manner, to express the great horror which God has of iniquity, the prophet says, God cannot bear the sight of it. Holy Scripture speaks, in innumerable places, of the hatred which God bears to sin. It is, then,

of faith that God is neither the cause nor the author of sin. But God permits moral evil—that is, disobedience, injustice; in a word, sin. Having created man a free agent, he will not prevent him from exercising the privileges of free will.

But, sin alone excepted, all other things, such as sickness, pains, afflictions, misfortunes, etc., happen by the order and will of God. This is an undeniable truth. What the pagans believe about chance is but a mere chimera or impossibility. Chance, or fortune, never bestows upon us those goods which are commonly called the goods of fortune; it is God alone who distributes them. The Holy Ghost teaches us this truth by the Wise Man, who says: “Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God.” (Ecclus. xi, 14.) He has ordained and regulated all things from all eternity. He has taken an account of every hair of our head, and not one of them shall fall to the ground without his will. “Are not two sparrows,” says Jesus Christ, “sold for a farthing? And not one of them falls to the ground without the permission of your heavenly Father.” (Matt. x, 19.) In regard to God, there is no such thing as chance. It is by the very will of God that all those things are regulated in which chance seems to have a share. “They draw lots,” says the Wise Man, “but it is by God that they are directed.” (Prov. xvi, 33.) Let us never imagine that anything happens by chance; what seems most of all to depend upon chance is an effect of his unalterable will, which adjusts all things for his wise purposes. “The lot fell upon Matthias” (Acts i, 26), says St. Luke: without doubt it was not by chance that the lot fell on him, but by a particular disposition of divine Providence, which, from all

eternity, had destined Matthias for an apostle, and made use of lots in his election to the apostleship.

A man once sent two servants by different roads, wishing them to meet each other. When they met they thought it was accidental or by chance, but it was not chance to the man who sent them. So it is precisely the same in things which seem to us to happen here below by chance. In regard to ourselves, who see things happen contrary to our expectation, and without ever having so much as thought of them, it is an effect of chance. But, in regard to God, it is an execution of his eternal decrees for purposes which are known to him alone.

What we have just said, namely, that all misfortunes and sufferings come from God, is a truth so firmly supported by the authority of Holy Scripture that it would be useless to dwell on it any longer, if the devil, by his vain subtleties, did not endeavor to obscure it, and render it doubtful. For, from the truth, that God is neither the cause nor the author of sin, he draws a false conclusion, making some believe that the evils which happen by natural causes, or come from irrational creatures, such as sickness, hunger, thirst, heat and cold, come, indeed, from God, because the causes from which they proceed are incapable of sin; but that the evils which happen by means of man, such as robberies, slanders, maltreatment, etc., do not come from God, but proceed only from the malice of man. This opinion is a very dangerous error. To do away with it, we must remember that in every sinful action two things occur, namely: the exterior action and the malice of the will. God is the cause and author of the exterior action itself, because the life and strength required to perform it are from God; but man alone is the cause and author of the



malice of his will, which induces him to do what God has forbidden. To illustrate:—There is a certain man. He kills his neighbor in a duel. To kill him, he must have a sword in his hand; he must lift up and stretch out his arm, and perform several other natural motions which may be considered in themselves, and are quite distinct from that malicious will which caused him to kill his fellow-being. God is the cause of the physical motions; he produces them, as he produces all other effects which proceed from irrational creatures: for, as they cannot move themselves or act without God, so neither can man, without God's help, move his arms, or put his hand to the sword. Besides, there is nothing in this kind of natural actions or motions that is bad; for, were a man to make use of them either for his own defence, or in a just war, or were he, as a minister of justice, to kill another, he would undoubtedly commit no sin whatever. But what makes the action sinful is the malice of the will which induces him to commit the murder, which, it is true, God might prevent, but does not prevent, but permits it by a secret judgment of his providence. So that we say, in truth, that God neither is nor can be the cause or the author of the crime. But as to all other evils, whether they proceed from natural causes and irrational creatures, or whether they come from men or from any other source whatsoever, we must believe for certain that they come from God, and happen to us by the decrees of his divine wisdom. It is God who moves the hand of him who strikes us; it is God who moves the tongue of our neighbor who gives us injurious language. "There is no evil in the city," says the Prophet Amos, "which the Lord hath not done." (Amos iii, 1.) When God speaks in Holy Scripture of the chastisements which

he intended to inflict upon David for his crimes, he makes himself the author of all those evils which were to come upon him by means of his son Absalom. "It shall be," says he, "from your own family that I shall raise up evil upon you. I will take away your wives before your face, and will deliver them up to your neighbors. You have sinned in private; but I will accomplish what I have said in the presence of all the people of Israel, and in the sight of the sun." (2 Kings xii.) It is for this reason that impious kings and emperors who inflict so many cruelties upon the people of God, are termed in Holy Scripture the instruments of divine justice. As God often makes use of the devil to try the faithfulness of his servants, or to chastise men for their sins, as we see in the history of Job and of King Saul, so, also, can he make use of wicked men to try our virtue, or to punish us for our sins.

"My servants," said our Lord to St. Catharine of Sienna, "by persevering in the consideration that all things which happen and which they endure proceed from me, and not from their neighbor, feel animated with unconquerable patience, which baffles every attack; so that they suffer everything, not only with a tranquil mind, but also with a cheerful heart, because in all things, whether exterior or interior, they taste the sweetness of my unspeakable love. To believe and to consider that I order all things sweetly, and that everything proceeds from the profound source of my love, is to give true honor to my goodness."

2. God permits the evils of this world to manifest his wisdom, by drawing good from evil. We will illustrate this great and consoling truth by a few examples. God permitted the fall of our first parents, which is the source of all the evils of this world. Now, what good has the wisdom

of God drawn from this great evil? Wishing to repair the fault of our first parents, the wisdom of God invented, and the power of God accomplished, two of the greatest works that he could invent and accomplish, namely: the incarnation of Christ, and the maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Thomas Aquinas asks whether God can make creatures which surpass in perfection those already created: and he answers, he can, except the incarnation of Christ and the maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In other words, God can create numberless worlds, all different from one another in beauty; but he cannot make anything greater than the works of the incarnation of Christ and of the maternity of the Blessed Virgin. Why can he not? Because God himself is most intimately united to each of these works, and is their object. Most assuredly, there is nothing greater than God. Hence there cannot be a work greater than any of these works with which his divinity is so intimately united. As there can be no man more perfect than Christ, because he is the man-God, so, also, no mother can be made more perfect than the Mother of God. These works are, in a certain sense, of infinite dignity, on account of being so intimately united to God, the infinite good. There cannot, then, be anything better, greater or more perfect, than the works of the incarnation of the Son of God and of the maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, because there cannot be anything better or greater than God himself. Now, had our first parents remained innocent, the Son of God would not have become man for us, and, consequently, we would have no Mother of God, and the Lord of heaven and earth would not dwell with us a man-God in the blessed sacrament. Hence it is that the Church exclaims: "Happy fault of our first parents, on

account of which we have received so great a Redeemer!" So that, "where sin abounded, grace did more abound." (Rom. v, 20.)

Another instance to show how God knows to draw good from evil is the following:—The Patriarch Jacob had twelve sons. One of them, called Joseph, was a very good son. One day, he told his father of some very wicked thing that his brothers had done. They were very angry, because Joseph had done his duty in informing against them. They said they would take revenge on him. One day, when they were minding the sheep in the country, Joseph came to see them. When they saw Joseph coming, they said to one another: Let us kill him. While they were thinking of killing him, some merchants happened to pass by. So they thought they would sell their brother Joseph to the merchants. Joseph cried and sobbed, and asked them to have pity on him, and not to sell him. But they had no pity for their brother. They sold him to the merchants for twenty pieces of silver. The merchants carried Joseph far away, into the land of Egypt. Now, let us see what good the wisdom of God drew from the crime of Joseph's brothers. Some years had passed, and a frightful famine had come over the land where Joseph's father and brothers were living. There was no bread to eat. On hearing that corn was sold in Egypt, they took sacks and went there to buy it. Having come into Egypt, they went to the house of the ruler, because all the corn belonged to him. There they found that the ruler was their own brother, Joseph, whom they had sold. Joseph cried through joy to see his brothers again. He gave them plenty of corn. He told them not to be afraid for having sold him, because it had been God's will that he should be sold to go into



Egypt, to provide corn for them during the famine. So the good which God drew from the crime of Joseph's brothers was to save Joseph and his father and brothers from dying of hunger in the famine.

There are many saints in heaven. Some of these led, for some time, very sinful lives on earth. After their conversion, they began to love God, to labor for his glory, and the salvation of souls, far more than many an innocent soul ever did. Why? Because, when they reflected on the goodness of God which had kept them out of hell and waited for their conversion, they felt so much touched and overcome by this divine mercy, that they were ready to take upon themselves every hardship and cross in order to please him. Their sins were so many tongues which God used to tell them how ardently they should love him; they were so many incentives by which God spurred them on to pass through every difficulty and labor for his sake; they were so many weights by which God kept them humble and despicable in their own eyes; they were so many reasons which God used to make them kind, affable, charitable, and indulgent towards other poor sinners. Witness the good thief on the cross; witness St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Margaret of Cortona, and many other saints. How true, therefore, is what our Lord said to St. Catharine of Sienna! "I wish," he said to this saint, "that you should often meditate upon me, your God, whose wisdom and knowledge are infinite; who see and penetrate everything at a glance; who cannot be deceived, nor disturbed by any error; who govern you, and, at the same time, heaven and earth, because I am God, the most wise Being. And in order that you may understand something of the effects of this wisdom of

mine, you must remember that, from *the evil of guilt and punishment, I can draw a good which by far surpasses the extent of the evil itself.*" Let us see now what good God draws for us from those trials which we also call evils, but which, viewed in the light of faith, prove rather to be true blessings.

*First.* The trials which God inflicts on us in this life are often designed to be the means of temporal prosperity. Joseph was sold as a wretched slave, by his brothers, to the Ishmaelites. Loaded with chains in a dark dungeon, he bewailed his hard fate. Who could have imagined that the ignominy of chains and the disgrace of slavery were destined to be the means of leading Joseph to the throne, and of obtaining for him the viceroyalty of Egypt? Yet, so it was. Whilst no one thought of it, God, in his wisdom, was secretly preparing to turn the shame of a prison into the glory of the highest honors.

Saul lost his beasts of burden, and taking the loss for a great misfortune, full of anxiety, he scoured the plains, climbed the hills, traversed the forests, in quest of his beasts. Who would have divined that, on that very day, Saul was to find the royal crown and throne of Israel, instead of a few worthless animals? Yet, so it was. God, who foresaw it, was making ready to compensate the loss with the gain of a kingdom.

*Secondly.* As, in the bitter medicines which the doctor gives, there is health, so, in the misfortunes which God sends us, there are blessings. The greatest blessings come in the shape of the greatest misfortunes. One day, there was great crying in the town of Bethlehem. A great number of poor babes had been killed. A cruel king, called Herod, wanted to kill the Infant Jesus, but

he did not know which of the babes was the intended victim. So he commanded the soldiers to kill all the babes. Then there was great weeping and lamentation in Bethlehem. The mothers would not be consoled, because their children had been killed. But, as I have said, in the misfortunes which God sends, there is a blessing. Those mothers were very sorrowful when they saw their infants dead, for they knew not that death was a blessing for their little ones. Because they died for the sake of the Infant Jesus, they are happy forever with him in heaven.

St. Francis of Sales was in a town called Ancona. He wanted to sail across the sea to Venice. Seeing a boat, he went to the captain and paid the price of a place in the boat. Then he went on board and sat down, waiting for the boat to set off. While he was sitting there, a person came and told him that he could not have a place, because all the boat had been hired by some one else. Francis begged that he might be allowed to stay, because he would take up very little room, and he was in a great hurry to go. However, he was not listened to. So he was obliged to take his things and go out of the boat. He thought it a great misfortune that he had lost such a good opportunity of going on his journey. He stood for a while on the land, watching the boat set off. A fine wind filled the sails, and carried the boat quickly over the water. The sun was bright, and the weather calm. But, when the boat was far out at sea, the weather began to change. Dark clouds covered the sky, the thunders roared and the lightnings flashed around the boat. It was tossed about by fierce winds. For a while the sailors struggled against the storm. But the waves of the sea dashed over them. At last, St. Francis saw the boat sink

down into the sea. Everybody in the boat was drowned! St. Francis then saw that the loss of his place in the boat was a great blessing. If he had been in it, he would have been drowned. He learned ever afterwards to believe that the losses and sufferings which God sent him were for his greater good.

### **8. Why, then, have the just often to suffer in this life?**

*That they may expiate their faults, increase their merits and their reward in heaven.*

It is a particular instance of the goodness of God to ordain that, by sufferings, we should expiate our sins. The Holy Ghost himself assures us of it, and instructs us that the day of tribulation is, in a special manner, and preëminently, the day of forgiveness: "In the time of tribulation, thou forgivest the sins of them that call upon thee." (Tob. iii, 13.) In the order of divine justice our sins deserve punishment; sooner or later we must undergo it, either as penitents in this life, or as reprobates in the next; but, with this dreadful difference, that the punishments of this life are short and meritorious, and those of the other everlasting and fruitless. Is not this a great advantage, cheaply bought at the cost of a trifling evil? What? An eternity of frightful torments reduced to some passing affliction! The dreadful scourges of an omnipotent arm which strikes to kill, changed into the temperate strokes of a paternal hand which only chastises to amend! Holy Job was well convinced of this truth, and therefore he begged God not to spare him, but to crush him with the weight of afflictions in this world, rather than make him suffer in the next. (Job. vi, 8.)

God also, by afflictions, increases the virtue of the just,



and, consequently, the merit and reward of virtue. We may say that sufferings give occasion to the practice of all virtues. By afflictions faith becomes more lively, hope more strong, charity more ardent; humility, patience, resignation, strike deeper root, and bring forth more abundant fruit. The just man will, perhaps, often ask God to be freed from his sufferings and temptations; but God, jealous of his honor, and of the salvation and sanctification of that soul, will say to it what he said to St. Paul, "Power is perfected in infirmity." (2 Cor. xii, 9.) It is more advantageous for you to bear the weight of your sufferings than to be exempt from them. You will be put to new trials, you will be exposed to new combats. But if you have a new occasion of fighting, you also will have new subjects of merit, of reward, of triumph. You shall engage under my eye; I will be your strength in battle. Arm yourself with courage. More merit is acquired in a quarter of an hour's sufferings, than in several years of consolation.

If we see Job sitting on a dunghill, Joseph loaded with chains in a dungeon, David reviled by Semei,—in a word, if we see a just man suffering, we immediately cry out in astonishment, How unhappy, how much to be pitied is that man! Blind mortals as we are, we call those unhappy who suffer; whilst Jesus Christ says, "Blessed are they that mourn." (Matt. v, 5.) Where is our faith? If God afflicts the just man, it is because he loves him; for, if he loved him less, he would treat him as he does the fortunate men of this world: he would permit him to enjoy the pleasures of this world, to be deluded with the world, to be perverted with the world; and the day would come when he would judge, condemn, and punish him

with the world. Sufferings are the mark of the elect. Whoever shall not be stamped with this sacred character shall never enter into that kingdom which Christ gained for us by his sufferings. We are all children of Calvary. It is there that Jesus Christ regenerated us with his blood. This tender, this dying Father left us no other inheritance, at his departure out of this world, than his cross and his grace. Let us accept this precious pledge of his love with a grateful heart; let us preserve it with humility and care. We shall one day gather with joy the undying fruit and reward of it. The saints never felt more happy than when God sent them afflictions. They believed most firmly that, the more they suffered in this life, the greater would be their reward in the next. Hence the martyrs went with the greatest joy to the place of execution, remembering what our dear Lord has said: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly, for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." (Matt. v, 11, 12.)

### 9. Why do the wicked often prosper in this world?

*Because even the wicked sometimes perform some good works, for which God rewards them in this life, as heaven cannot be theirs in the next.*

We often meet persons who, weighed down by misery, complain of God, and break out into exclamations like these:—When I cast my eyes on this great world and see all that passes in it, I look for a providence; but it seems to have vanished, its splendor disappears from my eyes. I behold such an unequal distribution of the goods of this world! Some have all things, and others have nothing.

Some are born in plenty and roll in riches ; others groan in misery, and only feed on the bread of affliction. Some seem to have come into the world to be happy ; and others, at their birth, to have had the fatal decree written on their forehead, that nothing shall prosper with them. All, nevertheless, are children of this divine providence. How am I to understand so strange an inequality in their situation ? Why is this man a king, and that man a subject ? Why is this man endowed with power to command as a master, and that other compelled to serve as a slave ? Why, being all children of God, are they not all made equal ? And why, being destined to the same end, are they not conducted through the same path ?

My good friend, you judge of things according to human appearances. You ask whether this inequality of situation and fortune is the work of providence ? Has providence ordained, you say, that some shall be rich, some poor, that some shall be sovereigns, and others subjects—some masters, and others slaves ? Suppose there was perfect equality in the fortunes and conditions of men. Tell me, then, how mankind, how civil society, and the union of its members could possibly subsist ? Found two cities, one composed of the great and rich, the other entirely of the low and poor. The establishment of the poor, you easily understand, would soon fall to ruin. But would that of the rich have a longer duration ? In this equality of rank and fortune, where all are upon the same footing, all equally rich and at their ease, who would take upon himself the painful and laborious, yet necessary, tasks of life, whilst others should be employed only in quiet and honorable functions ? Who, in the quality of a laborer, would water the ground with his sweat, whilst others are

reposing in the bosom of luxury and delights ? In a town, would you wish all the inhabitants to be without distinction, or all of them to be magistrates endowed with authority ? And in the world, shall all be subjects, or all be intrusted with power ; or, if no one is appointed to command, and no one is subject, what will the world be but a place of anarchy and confusion ?

Hence this inequality of states and conditions, so far from being contrary to providence, is the certain effect of it ; and because there is a providence, there must be an inequality of states and conditions. It belonged to God's wisdom, which comprehends all things, to unite men among themselves by the ties of subordination and dependency, to the end that, by the fortunate comforting the unhappy, and by the rich assisting the poor and wretched, the rich and fortunate and the poor should unite their voices in proclaiming the praises of that providence which governs all.

But I hear you say : Suppose this unequal distribution of the goods of the world is necessary among men, should not, then, the just be privileged in preference to the wicked ? Why not confide the exercise of power and the possession of the riches to the good, who would make a proper use of them, instead of bestowing them on the wicked who abuse and dishonor their trust ?

I answer : If you consider the wisdom of God, you will be forced to acknowledge here again the wise dispositions of God's providence. Why does God refuse earthly goods to the just ? It is with a view that they may not cease to be just. In abundance, they would grow haughty and be perverted. God also refuses earthly goods to the just, in order to exercise their virtue and embellish their crown. Job rendered God more honor on a dunghill than the



kings of the earth on their thrones. On the other hand, why does God bestow earthly goods on sinners? To show the vanity and nothingness of these goods, and to attract his very enemies by temporal rewards. He also grants these goods to them, in order that they may expiate their sins by using them for good purposes, or that he may thus repay them for the good they do in this life. He rewards their natural virtues with natural recompenses. Thus he formerly bestowed the empire of the world on the Romans, in return for the natural virtues which they practised.

However, the conduct of God's providence in this point is not always uniform. God does not always refuse earthly goods to the just, lest some should be tempted to imagine that these temporal blessings are not the work of his hand, if he were never to bestow them on his faithful servants. And God does not always grant them to sinners, lest some should be induced to fancy that, in order to become rich, it suffices to be wicked. God's providence disposes otherwise. By a wise moderation which he observes in the distribution of goods, he tries to keep both the good and the bad within proper bounds, and to restrain their desires, under the veil of the impenetrable secrets of his divine providence. Again, do not think that, because Almighty God sometimes allows the wicked a fatal liberty to prosper, he forgives, or even views leniently-their impiety. "The prosperity of the fools," says Solomon, "shall destroy them." He does not say, "destroys them," but "shall destroy" them. Why so? Because the prosperity of the wicked does not always produce immediately disastrous effects. Sometimes the reverse comes after a long delay. Wait patiently. You will see the end of what seems to begin so well. "Almighty God," says Job, "takes pleasure in

defeating the machinations of the impious. He brings their counsellors to a foolish end," not to a bad beginning. No; all seems prosperous at first. It is the end which is disastrous. He lets them raise aloft their mighty tower of Babel. But afterwards, in the confusion of their pride, they disperse and are gone. For want of this reflection, many men wonder at the prosperity of the wicked. Even the prophets themselves address God sometimes with tender reproaches. They appear almost to accuse him. We are apt to look too much at the beginning of things, and not, like holy David, at the end. Who would have thought that the honors which Aman had received from King Assuerus, and his advancement to the position of the favorite courtier of his sovereign, were destined to conduct him to a shameful death on the gibbet? It is certain, however, that Aman was brought to this pass by his rise to power. God had decreed that the opprobrium of the scaffold should be the end of Aman's ambitious and prosperous career. To what a shameful end did not God bring certain Greek, Roman, German and French emperors, after a prosperous career of a few years! Who would be willing to enjoy their "prosperity," if, with it, he had to accept the reverse? Is there any one stupid enough to envy their short-lived "good-luck"? "The prosperity of fools will destroy them." It is hardly worth while to add more proofs. It is a daily experience that "man shall not be strengthened by wickedness;" and that "the unjust shall be caught in their own snares," because "they who sow iniquity shall reap destruction."

But, permit me, you will say, to speak of my own personal misfortunes, and on the conduct of God's providence relating to particular circumstances in which I find

myself placed. I have, it seems to me, omitted nothing to make providence favorable and propitious to me, and yet it appears to withdraw itself from me. I made choice of a state of life, and I have been unfortunate in it; I engaged in different kinds of business, after recommending the success of them in my prayers to Almighty God, and they miscarry. Not one of my enterprises has been successful. If I engage in any affair, it is attended with ill-success. Everything turns against me. My friends abandon me, my enemies persecute me, even God himself seems to forsake me. Were I not afraid of blaspheming, I would say, Where is providence?

Alas! do you know what the designs of providence are in your regard? Await the time of God's decrees, and, when that time comes, you will see all unravelled before you. The veil will be withdrawn, and providence will justify itself. It is true, if you were to live forever upon earth, and had nothing to hope for beyond it, you would have reason to be distressed and afflicted; but when you reflect that God has not placed you in this world forever; that the earth is only a place of pilgrimage and banishment for you, a dwelling for a while, and a time of trial, after which a new order of things will be disclosed to your eyes, and reward or punishment, according to your deserts, will be administered,—can you, from this point of view, call God's providence in question, as if your labors were to be fruitless, as if your tears were never to cease flowing, as if your virtues and trials were to be without reward? And should you not, on the contrary, say to yourself: "If there is a providence, things must be so; the traveller must go through the toils of his journey before he can relish the delights of his own home; gold must be cleansed in the fire, to come

forth pure and resplendent; the grain must rot in the earth to bring forth a hundred-fold in return; finally, to reap in gladness, we must sow in tears"?

Remember the case of the rich miser in his grand palace, at one time seated before a table covered with exquisite meats, at another time softly reclining on a downy bed, or sauntering through pleasant gardens, followed by crowds of lords. Next, let them turn their gaze on the wretched beggar lying upon the steps of the palace, with nothing but rags to hide his nakedness; covered with sores; with no linen to dress his wounds, but forced to allow the very dogs to lick them; without a morsel of bread, and without hope of getting a mouthful from the rich miser. Now, judge of the fate of both, and determine which of the two you would rather be,—the rich man or the beggar. You will at once say, the rich man, because he is happy; not the poor man, who is wretched. Know, then, that you have judged quite wrongly; for this rich man is that unfortunate glutton, whose pleasures and magnificence were so many snares which entrapped him into everlasting ruin. The beggar is that unfortunate Lazarus, whose miseries were like so many golden keys to open to him the gates of heaven. God gave earthly enjoyments to the rich man—partly, to reward him for the occasional good works performed by him, and, partly, to punish him by giving him up to the desires of his heart, and not chastising him as he chastised Lazarus, his true servant. This is evident from the answer which Abraham made to the rich glutton then in hell: "Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." (Luke xvi, 25.)



After all, you must know that, in spite of all your endeavors and all your searches, there will always remain impenetrable mysteries in God's providence. If you extend your view beyond certain prescribed limits, always asking in all things the "why" and the "how," then you have reason to fear that the dreadful sentence will be pronounced against you: "He that is a searcher of Majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory." (Prov. xxv, 27.)

In his youth, St. Ephrem (who died as deacon 378) was troubled with doubts concerning divine providence; but God, in his mercy, completely cured him. One day he was sent on an errand, and had to pass through a wood. On his way, he saw the cow of a poor neighbor lying under a shed. Little Ephrem drove off the cow and chased her through the woods, till she was overcome with fatigue. During the night the cow was attacked and devoured by wild beasts. Little Ephrem thought no more of his mischievous sport; but God did not forget it so easily. About a month afterwards, Ephrem was again sent on an errand. This time he was obliged to stay over-night with a shepherd. During the night the shepherd indulged a little too freely in strong drink, and, while he slept, a pack of wolves came and killed and scattered the sheep. Next day, Ephrem was arrested by the owner of the sheep, and accused of being in league with a band of robbers, who, it was said, had killed the sheep. Young Ephrem loudly protested his innocence; but it was all of no avail, he was declared guilty, and was cast into a gloomy dungeon. A few days after, two other criminals were confined in the same prison. Now, one night, whilst Ephrem slept, he had a remarkable vision. An angel, in the shape of a beautiful youth, appeared to him, and asked him why he was detained there. "Oh!"

said Ephrem weeping, "for no reason at all. I am perfectly innocent." The beautiful youth smiled, and said: "It is true you are innocent of the charge brought against you: but do you not remember how, some time ago, you chased a poor man's cow, so that it died of exhaustion? Remember, God is patient, but he is just. Your companions in prison are also innocent of the crimes laid to their charge, but ask them if they are not guilty of other crimes." Next morning, Ephrem told his two fellow-prisoners of his vision, and asked them whether they had not committed some other crimes. One of them said: "I am innocent of the murder laid to my charge, but, some time ago, I became guilty in another way. One day, as I was crossing a bridge, I saw two men quarrelling violently. At last one of them threw the other into the river. The drowning man cried piteously for help; I could have assisted him, but I neglected to do so, and so at last the poor man was drowned. I see that God is now punishing me for this sin." The other prisoner said: "I am entirely innocent of the crime of adultery of which I am accused, but, two years ago, I became guilty of another very grievous sin. I knew two brothers, whose parents, when dying, had divided the property between them and their only sister. Now, these unnatural brothers wished to disinherit their sister. They therefore accused her falsely of having lost her virtue. They gave me fifty pieces of silver, on condition that I would also swear against her. Though I knew that she was innocent, I perjured myself, and swore that she was guilty. God is now punishing me for this detestable crime." Next day, these two prisoners were put to the torture: they continued to protest their innocence, and were finally set at liberty. Ephrem witnessed these

tortures, and now he had to remain for forty days more, all alone, in prison. At the end of this time, three more culprits were brought into prison. During the night the beautiful youth appeared again to Ephrem, and asked him whether he knew these prisoners. "How should I know them?" answered Ephrem sadly. "Well," said the angel, "one of them is that wicked man who threw his enemy from the bridge into the river; and the others are the two unnatural brothers who calumniated and disinherited their own sister." Next morning, Ephrem told his vision to his fellow-prisoners, and they acknowledged, with sighs and tears, that it was all true. After remaining thirty days in prison, these criminals confessed their guilt, and were put to death. Ephrem now remained, all alone, in prison, for twenty-five days longer. At last the beautiful youth appeared to him for the third time, and said: "Do you believe now that there is no such thing in the world as chance or accident? Do you believe now that God governs everything?" "O yes," said Ephrem weeping, "I believe! I believe that God is just and wonderful in all his ways." Ephrem then promised that, if he were freed from prison, he would quit the world, and consecrate his whole life to the service of God. The angel promised him his liberty. Five days after, the old shepherd appeared before the judge, and testified to Ephrem's innocence. Ephrem was set free, but he had learned a valuable lesson: he never afterwards doubted of God's providence. During the remainder of his life he served God faithfully, and became a great saint in a short time, by accustoming himself to take all things, both prosperous and adverse, as coming from the hands of God for his greater good.

**10. How, then, should we regard the sufferings of this life?**

*We should regard them as so many blessings of Almighty God.*

Almighty God created us to be his own in time and in eternity. But, in consequence of the fall of our first parents, we feel inclined to leave him, the source of all happiness, and to attach ourselves to this world, the abyss of all miseries spiritual and temporal. But God, as the best of all fathers, makes use of different means to counteract that evil inclination of ours which draws us more and more away from him, the ocean of *all goods*. As fowlers use different kinds of bait for different kinds of game, so God bends and applies himself to the several dispositions of men, both for their benefit, and to maintain the sweetness of his fatherly providence over all. He draws some souls to himself by love. But the number of these souls is very small. In fact, among the women whose conversion is related in the Gospel, St. Magdalen is the only one who followed our Saviour through love. God draws the greater part of souls to himself by the troubles of this life. The woman of Chanaan went to our Lord, that she might obtain relief in her temporal distress. St. Paul the Hermit and Arsenius withdrew into the desert, to escape persecution. St. Paul the Simple became a hermit on account of the unfaithfulness of his wife. Blessed Gonsalvus resolved to become a Dominican, because, while riding gaily and swiftly through the streets, he was thrown from his horse into a mud-puddle, and was laughed at by all those who were eye-witnesses. While yet in the mud-puddle, he said to himself: "Is it thus, treacherous world, that you treat me? You now deride



me, but I also will laugh at you." This said, he abandoned the world and embraced the religious life.

Nicholas Bobadilla, a poor student of Paris, often went to see St. Ignatius Loyola, for the sake of relief in his temporal wants; but he soon felt drawn by a holy love to St. Ignatius, and became one of his first and most zealous companions.

The venerable Bernard of Corlione, in trying to escape the hands of human justice, fell into those of divine mercy, by going to join the Capuchins.

Thomas Pounc, an Englishman, fell most awkwardly, while dancing at a ball of the Queen of England. "Get up, you fool!" said the queen to him. The young man, feeling highly offended, resolved to avenge himself on the world, by quitting it. He entered the Society of Jesus, where he led a holy life; and after having suffered in a dungeon for twenty years, during the time of religious persecution in England, he finished his life, by sacrificing it, at last, for the sake of the faith.

"I have heard on good authority," relates St. Francis de Sales, "that a gentleman of our age, distinguished in mind and person, and of good family, seeing some Capuchin Fathers pass by, said to the other noblemen who were with him: 'I have a fancy to find out how these barefooted men live, and to go amongst them, not meaning to remain there always, but only for three weeks, or a month, so as to observe better what they do, and then mock and laugh at it afterwards with you.' So he went, and was received by the fathers. But Divine Providence, who made use of these means to withdraw him from the world, converted his wicked purpose into a good one; and he, who thought to take in others, was taken in

himself: for, no sooner had he lived a few days with those good religious, than he was entirely changed. He persevered faithfully in his vocation, and became a great servant of God.

St. Ludwina hurt herself very seriously at the age of sixteen. She became bedridden for thirty-five years. Her disease at last grew so violent, that her flesh began to corrupt and to be filled with worms. The putrefaction extended even internally. As she was poor, she had not even sufficient clothes to keep herself warm; so that the tears which she frequently shed, froze on her cheeks. She could move only a little her head and one of her arms. The pains which she suffered for thirty-five years are beyond description. It was five years before she understood that God had sent her those afflictions as a means to draw her soul to himself, and unite it to his holy will in a most intimate manner in time and for all eternity. No sooner was she convinced of this, than she began to weep most bitterly over her want of submission to the dispositions of Almighty God. She ever afterwards was most grateful for all the pains which God made her endure, looking upon them all as so many blessings and gifts of her heavenly Father. She thus became one of the most admirable saints in the Church of God.

Thus many souls enter into themselves through disgust or weariness, or on account of disappointments or misfortunes. God makes use of such disappointments and troubles to detach them from the love of creatures, to preserve them from the delusion of false appearances, and to force them to enter into themselves; to purify their hearts; to cause goodness to take root in their souls; to give them a distaste for a worldly life. Do you think such souls would

have sought consolation only in God, if the world had loved them? Do you think they would have known the sweetness of God, if the world had not maltreated and banished them from its society? It is God who permits such harsh treatment and contumelies to befall them. He causes thorns to spring up in all their pleasures, in order to prevent them from reposing thereon. They would never have belonged to God, had the world desired them; and they would have been adverse to God, had the world not been adverse to them. It is thus that the Lord breaks the fetters by which the world held them in bondage. Yes, God had, as it were, to deprive them of their sight, as he did Tobias, to enlighten them; he had to prostrate them on the ground, like Saul, to lift them up; he had to cast them, if we may say so, into the grave, like Lazarus, to restore them to the life of grace. They had, as it were, exhausted the treasures of his goodness. Holy inspirations, moving considerations, wholesome advices, edifying examples, remorse of conscience, had all been employed through the tenderness of his mercy, and all rendered fruitless through the obduracy of their hearts. No other means are left in the treasury of grace than afflictions. How many have only shed tears for their sins after they had wept for their misfortunes! How many never ceased being criminal till they began to be unhappy! In truth, who would not have been moved to pity at the spectacle of King Manasses stripped of his treasures, and of his kingdom, and of his liberty, enslaved to the King of the Assyrians, and weeping and lamenting in a shameful bondage? And yet his great misfortunes were the greatest blessings which God could send upon the wicked king; for, a prey to great miseries, this king entered into him-

self, detested his crimes, did severe penance for them, and secured his salvation. (4 Kings v, 1.) Let us imitate the saints in their love for the cross, and always say with St. Paul: "If we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified with him; for I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii, 17, 18.)

**11. What do we call the care of God in preserving and governing the world?**

*We call it God's providence.*

It is impossible to tell how much God loves us, and how great is the care which he takes of us all, even of the least of his little creatures, and how much he rejoices to do good to them all. The little flower in the woods, which, perhaps, nobody ever saw, God loves it and gives it colors so beautiful, that no king in all his glory was ever so elegantly arrayed. The birds which fly in the air do not work or labor, and yet they eat every day as much as they like: and who is it that takes care to feed them? It is Almighty God, who scatters grain about the earth for them to eat. The little gnat which flies in the air, and is so small that we can scarcely see it, is not forgotten by God; but he takes care of it, and gives it wings to fly with, and he loves to see it happy and flying in the sunshine. The poor worm which creeps on the earth, God takes care of it and feeds it. But he takes far more care of men, especially of his faithful servants. He always thinks of them, and protects them, and is constantly giving them opportunities to become better and holier. Now, this care which God takes of his creatures, is called divine providence. If we abandon ourselves to God's providence, and accustom ourselves to



receive all things as coming from God, we shall soon enjoy great happiness and true peace of mind, and lead a heavenly life upon earth. The pious Thauler, a learned priest of Cologne, had a great desire to become very holy. For eight years he prayed to God that he might find some one who would teach him the best way to become perfect. One morning, when he was praying more fervently than usual, he heard a voice which said: "Go to the door of the church: there you will find some one who will teach you the best way to become holy." He knew that this voice came from God. So he went to the church to find the person who was to teach him how to become very holy. When he came to the door of the church, he found no one there except a poor old beggar, who was very dirty and covered with sores. All the clothes the beggar had on were not worth three farthings. He spoke kindly to the beggar, wishing him good morning. The beggar answered: "I do not remember that I ever had a bad morning." "God be good to you!" said the learned man. "God is always good to me." "But," said the learned man, "I cannot understand you: what do you mean?" "I will tell you what I mean," said the beggar. "You wished me good morning, and I answered that I never had a bad morning, as you will see. If I am hungry, and can get nothing to eat, I say: '*O my God! thy holy will be done.*' If I am cold, and there is no fire, I say: '*O my God! thy will be done.*' If it rains or snows, I say: '*O my God! thy will be done.*' If I am sick, or have a pain, I say: '*O my God! thy will be done.*' If somebody injures me, I say: '*O my God! thy will be done.*' So I am always content, and never had a bad day. I said that God is always good to me; because, whatever God sends me, whether it be joyful or painful,

sweet or bitter, I know it is for the best. So I am always prosperous and happy." The good priest understood the lesson. From that time he accustomed himself to take all things, prosperous as well as adverse, as coming from the hand of God, and soon enjoyed a profound tranquillity of mind and great peace of heart, because his will was united to the holy will of God in all things. Let us go and do likewise. In joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, in life and in death, let our prayer be : " O my God ! not my will be done but thine."

## II.—THE ANGELS.

### 1. What are the angels ?

*The angels are pure spirits, created by God, and endowed with great perfections of nature and grace.*

Angels are pure spirits, that is, intelligent spiritual beings. They have no bodies, nor were they created to be united to bodies, as our souls are. They have no size, no figure, no head, no hands, no feet. They cannot be seen or felt by our senses. They are simple beings; that is, they are not composed of parts. Hence they are immortal, as every spirit is; for a being that is not composed of parts can never perish except by the omnipotence of God. They surpass men in subtlety and quickness of penetration, in knowledge and science of natural things. They enjoy the faculty of communicating their thoughts to one another, and also understand those of others. This is but an imperfect description of the nature and properties of the good spirits. But, unspeakably more wonderful, are the noble spiritual endowments of grace, and the riches of immortal glory, with which they are adorned. They are the spotless ministers who approach nearest to the throne of God. In contemplating God's infinite beauty and incomprehensible perfections, they drink plentifully at the fountain of his holy joy and love; pouring forth, with all their strength, without intermission, a perfect spiritual homage of profound adoration and praise to the glory of his holy name.

**2. What is the meaning of the word "angel"?**

*The word "angel" means messenger.*

We know from Holy Scripture that God often makes use of the heavenly spirits in executing his orders. They have often come down from heaven, bearing the orders of God, and making known to men the designs of God's goodness, justice and mercy; sometimes speaking in a voice of thunder to the wicked, and at other times in accents of joy to the faithful servants of God. They were sent to Abraham and Lot, to tell them that God had taken them under his protection, but that he would punish the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in a most frightful manner. The Angel Gabriel was sent to the Prophet Daniel, to tell him the precise time of the coming of the promised Redeemer, the mighty works which the Redeemer was to perform, and the terrible punishments which were to fall on the ungrateful city of Jerusalem. The same Angel Gabriel was afterwards sent to Zachary, to tell him of the birth of St. John the Baptist; and to the Blessed Virgin, to announce to her that she was to become the Mother of God. Now, whenever the blessed spirits are employed to bring down to men messages from God, they are called *angels*, which word means messengers. The name of angel, then, does not, properly speaking, indicate the nature of the heavenly spirits: they receive this name in virtue of the office which they perform.

**3. Why are the heavenly spirits called angels?**

*Because God uses them as ministers and messengers to execute the decrees of his divine providence.*

From what has just been said, we see that God is pleased often to employ his holy angels as ministers and messengers



to execute his holy decrees. He can do all things by a simple act of his will, and needs no ministers to execute his orders, as monarchs of this world do. It is not from the want of power, but merely from his infinite goodness and wisdom, that he employs superior spirits in various dispensations of his providence concerning men. By angels he showed to St. John the future state of his Church (Apoc. i, 1), and many wonderful visions to Daniel (viii, ix, x), and other prophets. They were his messengers in the execution of the principal mysteries relating to the incarnation, birth, flight into Egypt, temptation, and agony of Christ. An angel conducted the Israelites into the promised land. (Exod. xiv, 21.) The Apostle St. Jude mentions a contest which St. Michael had with the devil about the burial of the body of Moses. He recommends humility, piety, and modesty in behavior, in imitation of this archangel, who on that occasion used no curse, no harsh or reproachful word, but, in order to repress the malicious fiend, only said: "*The Lord command thee.*" (Jude i, 9.) Angels carried the soul of Lazarus into the place of rest. (Luke xvi, 23.) Their host will descend with Christ, on the last day, and will assemble men before his tribunal. (Matt. xxiv.) Thus we see most clearly that the angels are the ministers and messengers of God, appointed to execute his orders, and to do his will for our benefit.

#### **4. Why are the angels represented as having wings ?**

*To show us how readily and how quickly they do the will of God.*

Though the angels are pure spirits, and so have no

bodies, yet they are represented by sculptors and painters as having bodies and wings. They are represented with wings, in order to express the swiftness with which they execute the orders of God ; and also because the prophets, in their sublime language, tell us that, through respect, the angels cover themselves with their wings in the presence of God. Angels have the power of moving from place to place, "even as quick as thought." Their swiftness cannot be easily conceived. If light comes from the sun to our eye in seven minutes, it must travel two hundred thousand miles in a second. Yet this is physical motion, which essentially requires succession of time. But the motion of a spirit, from the highest heaven to the lowest point of this world, is instantaneous. An angel carried in a moment the Prophet Habacuc by the hair to Babylon, to feed Daniel in the lions' den. St. Francis de Paul, learning that his parents were to be executed for the supposed murder of a man whose body had been found in their garden, said to our Lord : "My God ! let me be with my parents to-morrow." The same night he was carried by an angel to his parents, living at a distance of four hundred leagues. The next day he commanded the dead man, in the presence of the people, to declare whether the murder had been justly laid to the charge of his parents. "No," said he, "your parents are not guilty." The saint again said to the Lord : "My God ! take me back to my monastery ;" and an angel of the Lord bore him back again.

### 5. Are there many angels ?

*There is a countless multitude of angels ; and Holy Scripture mentions nine choirs or orders of angels, divided into three hierarchies.*

The number of the angels is exceedingly great ; it is represented in Scripture by thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand ; and in the book of Job it is written : “ Is there any numbering of his soldiers ? ” (Job. xxv, 3.) These numberless armies of glorious spirits are the bright ornament of the heavenly Jerusalem. They are called, by St. Clement of Alexandria, “ the first-begotten of God.” (Strom. i, 6) ; and by St. Sophronius, “ the living images and representatives of God.” (Orat. de Angel. excel.)

### 6. Name the three hierarchies of angels ?

1. *The seraphim, the cherubim, and the thrones.*
2. *The dominations, the virtues, and the powers.*
3. *The principalities, the archangels, and the angels.* (Col. i, 16 ; Eph. i, 21 ; Ezech. x ; Isa. vi, 2.)

The fathers of the Church, according to Holy Scripture, distinguish nine orders of these holy spirits, namely : the *seraphim*, burning with love, and transformed, as it were, into God by the fire of charity ; the *cherubim*, endowed with intelligence inferior only to that of God ; the *thrones*, on whom the Eternal reposes with complacence ; the *dominations*, whose authority extends to all the works of God’s hands ; the *principalities*, who are crowned in heaven like kings ; the *powers*, who make the devils tremble ; the *virtues*, by whom Almighty God works the wonders of his right hand, awakes the tempests and whirlwinds, and hurls his thunderbolts ; the *archangels*, whose office it is to

announce to men the mighty things which the Lord is pleased to do; the *angels*, who are the ordinary ministers of his behests, and who preside over the destinies of man. This whole heavenly hierarchy surround and *assist at the throne of God*, adoring his wisdom, his goodness, his power. They receive his orders with joy, and perform them with a holy eagerness.

**7. Were the angels, at their creation, in possession of eternal glory?**

*No; though created holy and happy, they were put on trial, to merit eternal glory.*

The angels were created from the beginning of the world, but, on what day they were created, we cannot tell for certain. Some of the fathers of the Church are of opinion that they were created when God said, "Be light made;" others think that they were created when God made the firmament. But it is a matter of very little importance to us to know at what time the angels were created. It is enough to know that there are angels, and what their office is. God created them in the state of grace and holiness. They were not, however, immediately after their creation, admitted to the beatific vision of God. They were to make themselves worthy of eternal glory by remaining faithful under the trial to which God subjected them.

According to St. Alphonsus (see Commandments, chap. i) and other fathers of the Church, this trial of the angels was the command of God to pay divine honor to his Son, who was to be made man. Hence Cornelius à Lapide, commenting on the words, "When he (God the Father) bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith: And let all the angels of God adore him" (Heb. i, 6), says: "After God had created the angels, he showed to them in spirit the future incarnation of his divine Son, and then commanded them to adore Christ incarnate,"



**8. Did all the angels remain faithful, when put on trial?**

*No; Lucifer and many others revolted against God, and were opposed by St. Michael the Archangel and his host.*

God, in his infinite wisdom, created the angels, and gifted them with intelligence and free will. Hence they were capable of acting wrong as well as right; they could, if they wished, persevere in grace and holiness, and thus render themselves eternally happy; or they could abuse their intelligence and free will, by refusing to do what God commanded them, and so forfeit their right to heaven. God made their eternal happiness depend on their submission to his will. Many of the angels remained obedient to the will of God; but many others refused obedience through pride, and rendered themselves most unhappy.

**9. What was the revolt of the angels?**

*They wished to be like unto God, and refused to serve him.*

Lucifer, the chief of those angels, was the most perfect of all. He was proud of his brilliant qualities, forgetting that he owed all his perfections to God. He wished to be placed higher in rank; he even wished to be on an equality with God himself. He said in his pride: "I will be like the Most High." (Isa. xiv, 14.) Incited by pride and ambition, Satan protested against the authority of God, against the right God has to reign and govern alone. He asserted the right of private judgment; he set himself up as the master and leader of a new kingdom; he commenced a warfare against the established order of the universe. He was followed in his rebellion by thousands of angels. "There was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon" (Lucifer), "and the dragon fought, and his angels." (Apoc. xii, 7.) St. Michael the Arch-

angel, full of zeal for the honor of God, cried: "Who is like to God?" The other good angels joined St. Michael's standard, and fought against the rebel angels. These could not resist, and their place was no longer found in heaven; and a loud voice was heard: "Rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell therein! Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down unto you full of anger and rage." (Apoc. xii, 10.)

### **10. How were the rebellious angels punished?**

*They were forever deprived of God's grace, changed into devils, and cast into the everlasting torments of hell.*

No sooner had the bad angels rebelled against God, than they were severely punished. They lost the grace and friendship of God forever. They were cast out of paradise into the everlasting torments of hell. All their brightness and beauty were at once changed into ugliness; all their love into hatred of God, their Creator. They will be evil spirits for all eternity. They will never again enjoy the beatific vision of God. Their everlasting home is hell, a place of unspeakable torments.

If we were to see a good and holy man, renowned for his wisdom, for his justice, who loved his children with the most tender affection, cast some of these beloved ones into a fiery furnace, into a prison of frightful torments, and then suffer them to linger on, in the most excruciating torments, in the agony of despair, and never to take pity on them, relieve them, to deliver them from their place of suffering,—what should we think or say? How enormous must be the crime which could deserve such a punishment! But this just, wise and loving father is God. He loved the angels with unspeakable love, and yet, for one mortal

sin, he cast them into hell, to burn there for all eternity. And it is God who does this, whose justice cannot inflict greater punishments than are deserved; whose mercy always punishes less than is deserved; whose wisdom can do nothing inconsiderately and without reason, and whose sanctity cannot admit of either passion or imperfection. And yet it is this God, so just, so wise, so holy, and so good, who punishes those heavenly spirits with so much severity as soon as they commit a mortal sin. Those princes of heaven, masterpieces of the divine omnipotence, adorned with all the gifts of nature and grace; whose number surpasses the imagination; who would have loved God, had they been able to repent, with an eternal and unbounded love,—they are all, without a single exception, cast into the eternal flames of hell for one single sin! the *first* sin ever committed—committed in an *instant*, and in *thought alone*! Alas! they suffer for this single sin a chastisement most frightful in its intensity, eternal in its duration, and the most dreadful, as to the pain of loss, which an Almighty God can inflict in his vengeance. It is impossible to picture the reality of their pains in hell. Whatever is related of hell in the Sacred Scriptures, in the writings of the fathers of the Church, or in the sermons of holy missionaries, is nothing compared to the reality. God made hell as a particular place of punishment for the wicked. It is therefore the centre of all evils. “I will heap evils upon them.” (Deut. xxxii, 24.) As in heaven God has united every good, so in hell he has united every evil. Let us never lose sight of hell.

**11. Was there a hell before the angels sinned?**

*No; God made hell only to punish sin.*

Before the angels rebelled there was no hell. But no sooner had they revolted against God, than hell was made to punish Lucifer and all the other rebellious angels. But some one may say, "I am not a Catholic, and I hold that there is no hell." The question is: Are you perfectly sure of this? Can you prove it? There have been men, far more learned probably, and far more wicked, too, than any who will read this book, and they tried very hard to prove that there is no hell. But they could never succeed. The infidel J. J. Rousseau was asked if there was a hell, and all he could say was that he did not know. The impious Voltaire wrote to a friend that, though he had tried long to prove that there is no hell, he could not succeed. All that such wicked men can say, with all their arguments, is that, *perhaps*, there is no hell. But to this "perhaps" is opposed a terrible "yea." It is the assertion of the living God himself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, asserts, in the clearest language, that there is a hell. He asserts it at least fifteen times in the Holy Gospels. And is it more reasonable to believe a man who doubts of what he says, or God, who knows what he asserts? Is it more reasonable to believe a man who has never thoroughly studied that which he denies, or the God of truth, who assures us that the heavens and the earth shall pass away; but that his words shall never pass away? Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us, in the most solemn manner, that there is a hell, that the just shall go into everlasting life, and that the wicked shall go into everlasting fire; that the damned in hell shall be salted with fire; that "their worm



shall not die, and their fire shall never quench." Consider who it is that speaks : it is Jesus, the blessed Saviour, who is so good and merciful.

Many a sinner wishes that there were no hell. But what do wishes avail? Whether you believe it or not, there is a hell, there is an eternal punishment. If we are told that there is a city called Rome, we may deny it, we may bring the most subtle arguments to our aid ; but, for all that, the city exists : it is a fact. And if we are told by Christ that there is a hell and an eternal punishment, we may deny it, and bring the most subtle arguments to the contrary ; still hell—an eternal hell—is a fact that cannot be ciphered away.

Holy Church, the pillar and ground of truth, declares, in the clearest terms, that hell exists, and she strikes with her anathema all those who dare deny its existence. All ages, all nations, unite in proclaiming that there is a hell. The demons themselves bear witness to it ; reason requires it. The soul that quits her body in the state of mortal sin, at enmity with God, remains in that state for all eternity ; she is fixed, unalterable, and for this reason she can no more repent. "Wherever the tree falleth, there it shall lie." As she can no more repent, her sin can never be forgiven, it will always remain ; and, on this account, she continues to be forever a subject of punishment.

This ought to be sufficient proof for the existence of hell, of everlasting punishments. However, if there be any one who still doubts, let him look upon Jesus on the cross. The cross, the blood, the wounds of Jesus preach most eloquently the dread reality of these never-ending torments. An eternal God suffers, an eternal God dies a most cruel, shameful death. And why ? Certainly not to save man

from temporal punishment, but to save him from eternal torments.

Again, let him who doubts the existence of an everlasting hell look into his own conscience. Call to mind that secret sin, committed when the darkness and silence of night surrounded you, when only God's all-seeing eye beheld you. Whence came the fear and shame that then overwhelmed you? Did not your conscience torture you with remembrance of hell, of the torments reserved for the wicked?

But some one may ask: Would it not argue cruelty and a want of mercy in God were he to punish the wicked forever? The answer is plain: God has decreed that the rewards destined for the just in heaven, in return for their good lives on earth, should surpass all that the eye has seen, the ear has heard, the heart has conceived. In like manner, has God decreed that the punishments which the wicked have to suffer in hell for their bad lives should surpass all that we can see, all that we can hear, all that we can conceive in our heart. God has decreed that the rewards of the just should last forever, and he has also decreed that the punishments of the wicked shall be everlasting. It is the will of the Lord that, by the everlasting rewards of the just, his infinite mercy should be glorified for all eternity; and it is also his will that, by the everlasting punishments of the wicked, his infinite justice should be made manifest for ever and ever. Let us "think well of the Lord;" that is, we must believe that the justice of God is just as great as his mercy. Let him who doubts of hell, of its everlasting punishments, remember what our Lord said of Judas the traitor: "Woe to that man! It were better for him if he had not

been born." (Matt. xxvi, 24.) Why? Because he went into hell. To-day, hell may seem the greatest folly. He who believes not in hell now, when he can escape it, shall believe in it hereafter, when he can no longer escape it.

It may here be asked, Where is hell? It is the common belief of the Catholic Church that God has fixed a certain place for the devils and the reprobates, as appears from several passages of Holy Scripture. St. Jerome proves this doctrine from the book of Numbers (c. xvi), where it is said Dathan and Abiron were cast into hell through a chasm which opened under their feet.

Moses went and told the people to come away from those men, and the people obeyed him. Then Moses said to them: "By this you shall know that God has sent me: if these wicked men die like other men, then do not believe me; but if the earth opens and swallows them, and they go down alive into hell, then you shall know that they are wicked."

No sooner had Moses done speaking, than the earth opened under the feet of Core, Dathan, and Abiron. It drew them in with all they had, and they went down alive into hell. Then the earth closed up over them again. The same thing happened to the cruel king, Theodoric, who lived in Ravenna. At the same time Pope John was living in Rome. The pope went one day to the town where Theodoric was living. When the king heard that the pope was come, he had him arrested and put in prison, where he was soon after killed by Theodoric's order, as was also another good man called Symmachus. Soon after this, as St. Gregory relates, the cruel king, Theodoric, himself died. In the Mediterranean Sea there is a little island called Stromboli, and on this island a great mountain,

from the summit of which fire was wont to issue. A holy hermit lived on the island in a small cell. It happened that on the night, when King Theodoric died, the hermit was looking out of his window. He saw three persons, whom he knew to be dead, near the top of the fiery mountain. The three persons were: Theodoric, who had died that night, and Pope John and Symmachus, who had been unjustly killed by Theodoric. Theodoric was between the other two. When they came to the place where the fire was coming out, he saw Theodoric leave the two, and go down into the fiery mountain. So, says St. Gregory, those who had seen the cruel king's injustice saw also his punishment.

In speaking of hell, the inspired writers often use the expression, "go down:" "Let death come upon them, and let them go down alive into hell." (Ps. liv, 16.) Hence it is probable, says St. Alphonsus, that hell is in the bowels of the earth.

All this is confirmed by St. Luke when he says: "That rich glutton died, and he was buried in hell" (xvi, 22). He says he was *buried*, because men are buried under the earth. The rich man called hell a place of torments. (Luke xvi, 28.) And Almighty God has said that he will "turn the wicked into the bowels of the earth." (Ecclus. xvii, 19.) Hence we infer that hell is a fixed place, in the centre of the earth.

## 12. What are the fallen angels called?

*They are called demons, devils, the powers of hell, evil spirits.*

The fallen angels differ in rank; they form a kind of hierarchy, and some are worse than others. They are



called the princes or angels of darkness, because, in punishment of their pride, they have lost their beauty and brightness, and have been cast into hell—the place of horror and darkness. Their prince is sometimes called Lucifer (bearer of light), sometimes Belial (the rebel), sometimes Beelzebub—from the chief idol of the Accoronites; sometimes Satan (the great enemy). The fallen angels are also called demons or devils—words signifying enemies, calumniators; because they are the implacable enemies of God and man. They are sometimes called evil spirits, because they are obstinate in evil, and hate whatever is good. Our Lord has also called the devil the prince of this world, because he succeeded, before the coming of Christ, in having himself worshipped as God by the greater part of mankind. Even to this day, Satan is worshipped by pagans and by many other wicked people. He is the prince of the wicked, for he rules and governs them, fills them with his own malice, and renders them his slaves.

### **13. Have the fallen angels any power over us?**

*Yes; they can tempt us to sin.*

St. Peter says that “the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Pet. v, 8.) It was this arch-enemy that persuaded Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit; it was he that prevailed on Cain to slay his innocent brother, Abel; it was he that tempted Saul to pierce David with a lance; it was he that stirred up the Jews to deny and crucify Jesus Christ, our Lord; it was he that induced Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Ghost; it was he who urged Nero, Decius, Diocletian, Julian, and other heathen tyrants, to put the Christians to

a most cruel death; it is he who inspired the authors of heresies, such as Arius, Martin Luther, and others, to reject the authority of the one true Catholic Church.

In like manner, the devil at the present day still tempts all men, especially the just, and endeavors to make them lose the grace of God. He tempts numberless souls to indifference towards God and their own salvation; he deceives many, by representing to them, in glowing colors, the false, degrading pleasures of this world; he suggests to others the desire of joining certain bad secret societies; he tempts many even to conceal their sins in confession, and to receive holy communion unworthily; others, again, he urges to cheat their neighbor; he allures others to blind their reason by excess in drinking; others, again, he tempts to despair. In a word, the devil leaves nothing untried, in order to make men fall into sin.

The rage, malice, and envy of the devils against man, and their enmity to all good, are implacable. Satan, the chief of the fallen spirits, makes his attacks upon men by putting on all shapes: sometimes by craft, or by snares and stratagems, as the old serpent; sometimes by disguises, transforming himself into an angel of light, and assuming the air of piety; sometimes by open assaults and violence, as the roaring lion.

He studies and observes every one's character, natural disposition, inclinations, virtues and vices, to find out, and make his attacks on, every one's weakest point.

The natural subtlety and strength of Satan are exceedingly great, as appears from the perfection of his being, which is purely spiritual, and from examples, when God has suffered him to exert his power in a more remarkable manner. Holy Scripture tells us that the devils hurried

the swine into the lake; that they killed the first seven husbands of Sara; that they have slain armies in one night; have often disturbed nature, and stirred up tempests, which struck whole provinces with terror, and ravaged the whole world.

What did not Satan do against holy Job? He killed his cattle and his children. He covered Job himself with ulcers from head to foot. And, in our own day, what did he not do against the saintly Curé of Ars, in France, for the space of thirty years?

Moreover, by clear proofs, it is also manifest that Satan can, by divine permission, enter our bodies, compel, as it were, the human being to stand aside and use our organs himself, and do whatever he pleases with them. But he cannot annihilate the human being, or take from the soul its free will. It is always in the power of the possessed to resist, morally and effectually, the evil intentions of the devil. The possessed person retains his own consciousness, his own intellectual and moral faculties unimpaired, and he never confounds himself with the spirit that possesses him. He always retains the power of internal protest and struggle. Whenever this power is exercised, and there is clearly a struggle, there is no responsibility whatever of attaching to him the crimes which the body, through the possession of the devil, is made to commit. But, unfortunately, it very often happens that this power to protest is not exercised, and the possessed person yields his moral assent to the crimes committed by the demon that possesses him.

Such diabolical possessions have been more or less frequent in different times and places. This is confirmed by the testimony and experience of all ages, and of all nations,

even to the remotest Indies. Such facts both the Old and the New Testament evince.

#### **14. Why does God permit the devil to tempt us**

*1, To try our fidelity ; 2, to reward us if we resist the temptation.*

1. God permits the devil to tempt us, in order to try our faithfulness in the practice of virtue. It is in great storms that we see whether a young tree has taken root ; it is not in time of peace, but in time of war, that we see the courage and valor of a soldier. In like manner, it is not in time of prosperity and sensible devotion, but in time of temptation, that we see the zeal and faithfulness of a true servant of the Lord. "I am ready," says holy David, "and I am not troubled that I keep thy commandments." (Ps. cxviii, 60.) Upon these words St. Ambrose remarks : "As a pilot must be very skilful to steer a ship in a great storm, so, in like manner, we show ourselves skilful if we behave well in time of temptation, being carried away neither by pride in prosperity, nor by want of courage in adversity, but exclaiming with holy David : 'I am ready, and I am not troubled that I keep thy commandments.'"

Now, it is for this very reason that God permits us to be tempted, namely, to try us, as he tried his people whom he left surrounded by many enemies, "in order," as Holy Scripture says, "that he might try Israel by them, whether they would hear the commandments of the Lord which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses, or not." (Judg. iii, 4.) Does not St. Paul also tell us that "there must be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest ?" (1 Cor. xi, 19.) Temptations are like strokes of the hammer, which show the value of the metal. They



are the touchstones by which God tries his servants. True friends are found out when put to the test. So God puts our faithfulness to him on trial. "As silver is tried by fire, and gold in the furnace, so the Lord trieth the hearts by the temptation." (Prov. xvii, 3.) When a man begins to practise virtue, it is difficult to know whether he does so out of true love for virtue, or for some other reason. But let him, like Job, be tempted and assaulted by the devil, and it will soon be known whether he is a faithful servant of the Lord.

2. God rewards us if we resist the temptation. An earthly monarch rewards his soldiers if they fight valiantly for him. To resist the temptation of abandoning God's service is to fight valiantly for God, who, according to his promise, never fails to reward us for the least good action. The oftener we resist temptation, the greater will be our reward. The oftener a man becomes drunk, the more he will be confirmed in the vice of drunkenness. In like manner, the oftener we practise a certain virtue, the more our will is confirmed in that virtue; and the more a will is confirmed in virtue, the holier it is in the sight of God; and the holier it is, the greater will be our reward in heaven. God, therefore, shows us greater love, by permitting us to be often tempted, and giving us strength to overcome the temptations, than by delivering us wholly from them; for, were we not to be exposed to temptation, we would lose many degrees of heavenly glory. Therefore, it is said in Holy Scripture: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him." (James i, 12.)

**15. How can we resist the temptations of the devil?**

*By watchfulness and prayer, for Christ says: "Watch ye and pray, that you enter not into temptation." (Matt. xxvi, 41.)*

God has given us prayer as the great, infallible means to overcome all temptations. To pray is to ask God to come to our assistance. Now, God has promised to come to our assistance if we ask him to do so. It is in temptation that we need his assistance to overcome it, because, of ourselves, we can do nothing; but, with the assistance of God, we can do all things. Let a temptation, then, be ever so strong, the help which God grants to our prayer to overcome temptation is always stronger. To defeat these temptations, we must be watchful over ourselves to notice the temptations of the devil, and then pray for help to overcome them. He who is watchful over himself and prays to God whenever he is tempted, will always be victorious. Our Saviour Jesus Christ teaches us this truth by his words and by his example. He teaches it by his words, when he says: "Watch ye and pray that you enter not into temptation;" that is, that you may not give way to the temptation. He teaches us this truth by his example; because by prayer he prepared himself in the Garden of Olives for all his sufferings. He prayed, not because he needed prayer, but because he wished to teach us by his example to have recourse to prayer in all our temptations. "Which of the just," asks St. John Chrysostom, "did ever fight valiantly without prayer? Which of them ever conquered without prayer?" (Sermo de Mose.) None of the apostles, none of the martyrs, none of the confessors, none of the holy virgins and widows.

Father Segneri relates that a young man named Paccus retired into a wilderness, in order to do penance for his sins. After some years of penance he was so violently assaulted by temptations, that he thought it impossible to resist them any longer. As he was often overcome by them, he began to despair of his salvation; he even thought of taking away his life. He said to himself that, if he must go to hell, it were better to go instantly than to live on thus in sin, and thereby only increase his torments. One day he took a poisonous viper in his hand, and in every possible manner urged it to bite him; but the reptile did not hurt him in the least. "O God!" cried Paccus, "there are so many who do not wish to die, and I, who wish so much for death, cannot die!" At this moment he heard a voice saying to him: "Poor wretch! do you suppose you can overcome temptations by your own strength? Pray to God for assistance, and he will help you to overcome them." Encouraged by these words, he began to pray most fervently, and soon after lost all his fear. He ever after led a very edifying life. Those, on the contrary, who do not pray in temptation, are generally overcome by the temptation.

St. Thomas Aquinas asserts "that Adam committed sin, because he neglected to pray when he was tempted." St. Gelasius says the same of the fallen angels: "In vain," says he, "did they receive the grace of God; they could not persevere, because they did not pray." (Epist. 5, ad Ep. in P.) St. Macarius tells us that a certain monk, after having been favored with a wonderful rapture and many great graces, fell, by pride, into several grievous sins. A certain rich nobleman gave his estate to the poor, and set his slaves at liberty; yet afterwards fell into pride

and many enormous sins. Another, who, in the persecution, had suffered torments with great constancy for the faith, afterwards, intoxicated with self-conceit, gave great scandal by his disorders.

Would to God that all might learn, from these sad examples, that our salvation depends on our perseverance in praying to God for aid to resist temptations, and to bear patiently the sufferings and adversities of this life!

**16. Why does God sometimes allow the devil to injure men in their bodies and in their temporal goods?**

*To try their virtue, or to punish them for their sins, or for other wise purposes.*

Although Satan, with implacable envy and malice, studies to disturb our temporal happiness, and to compass our eternal ruin both by stratagems and open assaults, yet it is certain that he can tempt and assail us only to a certain degree; he can go only the length of his chain, that is, as far as God permits him. This is evident from the history of Job. The devils could not enter into the swine of the Gerasenians without permission. Before Satan was bound, or his power curbed by the triumph of Christ over him, and the spreading of the happy light and influence of the gospel throughout the world, the empire which Satan exercised on earth was much greater than since that time. However, there can be no doubt that, in our own days, the power and influence of Satan over an immense number of men is great, very great; and it will increase in proportion as they approach heathenism and infidelity, and leave the true religion.

However, with regard to the effects of magic and possessions of devils, the Catholic Church says, in the



Ritual, that such extraordinary effects are not to be easily supposed; that superstition, credulity, and imposture are to be guarded against; and that natural distempers, such as certain species of madness, extraordinary palsies, epilepsies, or the like, are not to be construed into effects of enchantments or possessions, which are not to be presumed upon ridiculous compacts and signs, nor upon vulgar prejudices and notions of the manner in which such things are done, but must be made apparent by circumstances.

The criteria of demoniac invasion or possession, as laid down by the Catholic Church for the guidance of exorcists, are the following:—

1. The understanding of unknown languages.
2. Power of speaking unknown or foreign languages.
3. Knowledge of things passing in distant places.
4. Exhibition of superior physical strength.
5. Suspension of the body in the air during a considerable time, etc.

If the devils could not enter into the swine, without permission from Jesus Christ, it is evident that Satan cannot touch or hurt men, without the same permission. The devils are called, in Holy Scripture, the *thieves of God*. They are called thieves, says St. Gregory, on account of their great desire to hurt men in body and soul; and they are called the *thieves of God*, to give us to understand that they receive power from God to hurt us. If God permits the devil to afflict and persecute the just, it is for the purpose of trying their virtue. Witness holy Job, whom the devil stripped of his health and of all his possessions. But Job bore most patiently all the afflictions which Satan caused him to suffer. “The

Lord," he exclaimed, "gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done." (Job. i, 21.)

But if God permits the devil to injure the wicked, it is for the purpose of punishing them: "The evil spirit of our Lord," says Holy Scripture, "seized upon Saul." (1 Kings xvi, 23.) Upon these words St. Gregory remarks, that the same spirit is called the spirit of our Lord, and an evil spirit. This spirit is called evil, because he is always bent upon doing injury to men; and he is called the spirit *of the Lord*, to give us to understand that God made use of him to punish Saul, for, in the same place of Holy Scripture, it is said: "The evil spirit was sent to trouble him."

God may also, for other wise purposes, permit Satan to injure men in their bodies, as is evident from the history of Mrs. Nicola Aubry. In the sixteenth century, it was not enough for Protestants to deny the Real Presence of our dear Lord in the blessed sacrament; they committed even the most abominable outrages on his sacred person in this mystery of love. In France particularly, the Calvinists entered the Catholic churches, overturned the altars, trampled the blessed sacrament under their feet, drank healths from the consecrated chalices, smeared their shoes with holy oil, defiled the church vestments with ordure, threw the books into the fire, and destroyed the statuary. They assaulted and massacred the Catholic clergy in the very discharge of their sacred functions, with cries of, "Kill the priests," "Kill the monks." In France alone, the Calvinists destroyed 20,000 Catholic churches. They pillaged and demolished monasteries and hospitals. The monks at Chartres were all murdered, with

the exception of one, who concealed himself; but, as soon as discovered, he was buried alive. In Dauphiny alone they murdered 255 priests, 112 monks and friars, and burnt 900 towns and villages.

Those were trying times for the Catholics in other countries as well as in France. Although the bishops and priests did all in their power to strengthen their flocks in the faith, yet it required an extraordinary miracle to confirm the faith of many, and confound the impiety of the heretics. This miracle was wrought by Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament at Laon, in France, on the eighth day of February, 1566. It occurred in presence of more than 150,000 people; in presence of all the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of the city, of Protestants and Catholics alike. The account of this stupendous miracle we published a few years ago. It is very interesting and instructive. The title of the little volume is, "Triumph of the Blessed Sacrament; or, The History of Nicola Aubry." It is, indeed, a remarkable fact that, as the devil made use of Luther, an apostate monk, to abolish the Mass and deny the Real Presence, in like manner God made use of his arch-enemy, the devil, to prove the Real Presence. He forced him publicly to profess his firm belief in it, to confound the heretics for their disbelief, and acknowledge himself vanquished by our Lord in the blessed sacrament. For this purpose, God allowed a certain Mme. Nicola Aubry, an innocent person, to become possessed by Beelzebub and twenty nine other evil spirits. The possession took place on the eighth of November, 1565, and lasted until the eighth of February, 1566. To read the torments which the devil made this innocent person endure, is enough to make the hair stand on end. When the Bishop

of Laon held the blessed sacrament before the face of the poor possessed woman, and conjured the devil, in the name of Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament, to depart from this innocent person, the devil felt horribly tormented : he made the poor woman writhe most fearfully. Her limbs cracked, as if every bone in her body were breaking. The fifteen strong men who held her could scarcely keep her back. They staggered from side to side ; they were covered with perspiration. Satan tried to escape from the presence of our Lord in the blessed sacrament. The mouth of Nicola was wide open, her tongue hung down below her chin, her face was shockingly swollen and distorted. Her color changed from yellow to green, and became even grey and blue, so that she no longer looked like a human being. It was rather the face of a hideous, incarnate demon. All present trembled with terror, and turned away their eyes in horror, especially when they heard the wild cry of the demon, which sounded like the loud roar of a wild bull. They fell on their knees, and, with tears in their eyes, began to cry out : " Jesus, have mercy !"

The bishop continued to urge Satan. At last the evil spirit departed, and Nicola fell back senseless into the arms of her keepers. She still, however, remained shockingly distorted. In this state she was shown to the judges and to all the people present. She was rolled up like a ball. The bishop now fell on his knees, in order to give her the blessed sacrament as usual. But suddenly the demon returns, wild with rage, endeavors to seize the hand of the bishop, and tries even to grasp the blessed sacrament itself. The bishop starts back, Nicola is carried into the air, and the bishop rises from his knees, trembling with terror, and pale as death.



The good bishop takes courage again; he pursues the demon, holding the blessed sacrament in his hand. Satan endeavors to escape, and hurls the keepers to the ground. The people call upon God for aid, and Satan departs once more with a noise which resembles a crash of thunder.

Suddenly he returns again in a fury, but the bishop pursued and urged Satan, holding the blessed sacrament in his hand, till at length the demon, overcome by the power of our Lord's sacred body, went forth amidst smoke and lightning and thunder. Thus was the demon at length expelled forever on Friday afternoon at three o'clock—the same day and hour on which our Lord triumphed over hell by his ever-blessed death.

It may appear strange that, although Satan was repeatedly expelled by the presence of our divine Saviour in the sacred Host, nevertheless it appeared as if our Saviour was forced to yield to Satan, when he again took possession of Nicola's body. Why this struggle between our Lord and Satan, since our divine Saviour is his Lord and Master?

It is true that our Lord is the Master of Satan; and yet we read in the Gospel how he permitted the devil to touch him and carry him up to the pinnacle of the temple, and to the top of a high mountain. On these occasions it must be remarked that he suffered himself to be touched by the devil, *only, when, and as long as* he gave him permission so to do. As soon as our Lord said to him, "Begone, Satan!" he took to flight. In like manner did he permit Satan to take possession of Nicola's body, sometimes even for a considerable time, not only to sanctify this innocent woman, but also to confirm, by these repeated

miracles, the Catholics in their faith in his Real Presence in the holy Eucharist, and to convert or confound the Protestants, who denied that Real Presence, and committed so many shocking outrages on his sacred person. For this reason, also, did our Lord force Satan to make a public profession of his faith in the Real Presence, not once only, but on several occasions, and in several places, in presence of thousands of Catholics and Protestants.

Many of those who witnessed the repeated miracles wept for joy, and sang hymns of praise and thanksgiving in honor of God, and of our dear Lord in the blessed sacrament. On all sides were heard the exclamations: "O what a great miracle! O thank God that I witnessed it!" "Who is there now that could doubt of the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the altar?" Many Protestants present also said: "I believe now in the presence of our Lord in the blessed sacrament. I have seen it with my eyes. I will remain a Calvinist no longer. Accursed be those who have hitherto kept me in error! O now I can understand what a good thing is the holy sacrifice of the Mass!"

Here we have an innocent person tormented by the devil in a most frightful manner; yet it is certain that the devil could only torment her to the extent of the permission which he had received from God; but hell is his domain, and there he has full permission from God to torment and strike the damned souls as much as he pleases. This permission is given him, not for a few hours, or months or years, but for all eternity. No human or heavenly power can go to rescue the damned soul from the ferocious barbarity and cruelty of the devil. Her place, like her torment, is eternal.

Let us in this life, by constant watchfulness and prayer, keep out of the power of the devil,—I mean, that power which he gains over us by sin,—in order that we may not fall into his power in hell.

**17. Can the devil be prevented from exercising his power over creatures?**

*Yes; by the prayers and exorcisms of the Church.*

Before the coming of our Redeemer mankind was groaning under the tyranny of the devil. He was lord, and even caused himself to be worshipped as god, with incense and with sacrifices, not only of animals, but even of children and human lives. And what return did he make them? He tortured their bodies with the most barbarous cruelty, he blinded their minds, and, by a path of pain and misery, led them down to torment everlasting. It was to overthrow this tyrant, and release mankind from its wretched thralldom, that the Son of God came; that the unfortunate creatures, freed from the darkness of death, rescued from the bondage of their eternal enemy, and enlightened to know the true way to salvation, might serve their real and lawful Master, who loved them as a Father, and, from slaves of Satan, wished to make them his own beloved children. The Prophet Isaias had long ago foretold that our Redeemer should destroy the empire which Satan held over mankind: “And the sceptre of their oppressor thou hast overcome.” (Isa. ix, 4.) Why does the prophet call Satan oppressor? It is because this heartless master exacts from the poor sinners who become his slaves heavy tribute in the shape of passions, hatreds, disorderly affections, by means of which, while he scourges, he binds them in a still faster servitude.

Our Saviour came to release us from the slavery of this deadly foe : but in what manner did he effect this release ? By offering his sufferings and death in satisfaction to the divine justice for the punishment due to our sins ; by the sacrifice of his life upon the cross, he overthrew the empire of Satan over mankind. " At the moment when our Lord received his cross," said the Blessed Virgin to blessed Mary of Jesus d'Agreda, " Lucifer and his demons lost all strength : they were vanquished and enchained, when Jesus, upon the cross, pronounced these words, ' Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' and bowing his head, expired. The ground opened, and the demon, with all his companions, was, in a terrific manner, swallowed up by the bottomless pit of hell, more quickly than a flash of lightning passes through the air. He fell, disarmed and vanquished, and his head (that is, his power) was crushed beneath the feet of my Son and of myself." Now, Jesus Christ left to his Church all the merits that he has obtained for us by his life and death ; and the Church applies the merits of our Lord to the souls of men by the sacraments, by holy Mass, by the sign of the cross, by her prayers and blessings ; and wherever the blessings of our Lord's death are thus applied, the power of the devil is of no avail. Hence it is that the devil trembles at the sight of all those means of grace. He fears and curses that power which Christ gave to his apostles, and, through them, to all their lawful successors. Christ said to his apostles : " To me is given all power in heaven and on earth. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." He who bestows all power, excludes none. Christ, therefore, gave to his apostles power to cast out devils from possessed persons, and to prevent the evil spirits from hurting men in their bodies



or property : “ And calling together the twelve apostles,” says St. Luke (ix, 1), “ he gave them power and authority over all devils.” And the same evangelist tells us, also, that the disciples cast out the devils from possessed persons, at which power they were greatly amazed, and said : “ Lord, the devils, also, are subject to us in thy name.” (Ibid. x, 17.) In virtue of this power, the Catholic bishops and priests can cast out devils from possessed persons ; they can prevent them, by the prayers of the Church, from exercising their powers over creatures, as we have just read in the case of Mrs. Nicola Aubry. This power of expelling demons and of preventing them from hurting creatures is found in the Catholic Church alone, because she alone is the true Church of Christ. Were any Protestant minister to attempt to exercise power over the devil, he would be laughed at by the evil spirit, as all those know who have read the account of Nicola Aubry’s possession. As the strange circumstance of her possession became known everywhere, several Calvinist preachers came with their followers, to “ expose the popish cheat,” as they called it. No sooner had they entered than the devil saluted them ; he called them by name, and told them that they had come in obedience to his inspiration. One of the preachers took his Protestant prayer-book, and began to read it with a very solemn face. The devil laughed at him, and, assuming a most comical air, said : “ Ho ! ho ! my good friend, do you intend to expel *me* with your prayers and hymns ? Do you think that they will cause me any pain ? Don’t you know that they are mine ? I helped to compose them !”

“ I will expel thee in the name of God,” said the preacher, solemnly.

"You!" said the devil, mockingly. "You will *not* expel me, either in the name of God, or in the name of the devil. Did you ever hear, then, of one devil driving out another?"

"I am not a devil," said the preacher, angrily; "I am a servant of Christ."

"A servant of Christ, indeed!" said Satan, with a sneer. "What! I tell you you are worse than *I* am. *I* believe, and *you* do not want to believe. Do you suppose that *you* can expel me from the body of this miserable wretch? Ha! go first and expel all the devils that are in your own heart!"

The preacher took his leave, somewhat discomfited. On going away, he said, turning up the whites of his eyes, "O Lord! I pray thee, assist this poor creature!"

"And I pray Lucifer," cried the spirit, "that he may never leave you, but may always keep you firmly in his power, as he does now. Go about your business. You are *all mine*, and I am your master."

### **18. What was the reward of the angels who remained faithful?**

*They were confirmed in grace, and in the possession of everlasting happiness.*

Those angels who remained faithful to God, and preserved the grace and holiness in which they had been created, were, as a reward for their faithfulness, confirmed in grace and glory; that is, God, without destroying their liberty, confirmed their wills forever in the love of him, so that they were incapable of sinning, or of losing their original holiness and justice. In the very instant that they were so confirmed in grace, they saw, by the light of glory, the infinite beauty of God, face to face; they were at once

filled, and, as it were, consumed, with love for God ; they were lost and immersed in that boundless ocean of God's goodness ; they forgot themselves, as it were, passing over into God and dissolving into him. The Lord communicated himself really to them, giving himself up to each one of them, in a manner most sweet and intimate. Each one of the angels in heaven, then, possesses God whole and entire, for God has given himself up to each one as he did to all of them together ; so that every angel enjoys and possesses God as completely as if God belonged to him alone. Thus they are all immersed in this immense ocean of happiness and delights. Being made partakers of the divine nature, they enjoy true, immense, and incomprehensible happiness. They have retained, it is true, their own nature, but they have assumed a certain admirable and almost divine form, so as to seem to be gods rather than angels. And what fills up the measure of their happiness is to be sure that *it* will last for all eternity, because they are forever inseparably united to Almighty God. And this unspeakable happiness they gained by their faithfulness to God. Their happiness will one day be our own, if we remain faithful to God to the end of our life.

### 19. What are the good angels doing for us ?

1. *The good angels present our prayers to God.*
2. *They make the will of God known to us.*
3. *They perform miracles for our benefit.*
4. *They are guardians of the Church and of each one of us.*

#### I.—THE GOOD ANGELS PRESENT OUR PRAYERS TO GOD.

There is a great king. He beholds a child among the lowest of the people. He orders at once a prince of his court to take it under his protection, to bring it up with

care, and watch over it day and night. I see this charity of the king, and cannot help saying to myself: Behold a sovereign, who has the heart of a father for that child! His extraordinary goodness to the child shows that he destines it to one of the first places in his kingdom. This is a touching image of what God does for us by the ministry of his angels. God is not content with sending us his Son and his Holy Spirit; no, the whole heavenly court is to contribute towards our happiness. He, therefore, sends his holy angels to serve us; for, such is the good office which they fill near us, according to the teaching of St. Paul. "Are they not all ministering spirits," says this great apostle, "sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb. i, 14.) Now, what is man that God should take such care of him, and give him, for his governors, the sublime princes of his heavenly court, the assistants of his throne? What is man but a worm of the earth, a slave to his passions? Must an angel, a creature so noble, so pure and so holy, attend on him? "O wonderful condescension! O excess of goodness and love!" cries out St. Bernard. (Serm. 12 in Ps. xc.) "'He hath given his angels charge over thee.' (Ps. xc, 11.) Consider seriously and weigh every part of this mystery. Who is he that has given this charge? The Lord of angels, whom they obey. The supreme majesty of God has laid a command upon the angels, and his own angels,—those sublime, those happy spirits, who approach so near his divine Majesty, his own domestics: and it is the care of thee that, by this sacred command, he has intrusted to them. What art thou? Is not man rottenness, corruption, and the food of worms? But what dost thou think he has commanded them concerning thee? '*That*



*they guard thee, that they keep thee in all thy ways.*' Nor do they loiter; they even '*bear thee up in their hands,*' as it were, '*lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*'" Assuredly, amongst the adorable dispensations of divine mercy in favor of men, it is not the least that he has been pleased to give us his own angels as our guardians and companions in this valley of tears, where the enemies of our salvation do all in their power to prevent us from obtaining in heaven the places which the rebellious angels forfeited through pride. The good angels understand, far better than we do, all the dangers that threaten our salvation; they understand, far better than we do, all that God has done to save us; they love us most tenderly; they share in that most compassionate love with which the heart of Jesus is burning for us. They know that we are destined soon to be their companions in eternal bliss; that we are at present, by grace and divine adoption, their brethren, their dear fellow-members in God,—dear to him who is their God and our God, and precious in his sight, having been purchased by him at the infinite price of his passion and death. They love us, then, as their fellow-citizens, who are destined to fill the vacant places, and to repair the ruin caused among them by the apostate angels. They show us their love, in many ways, throughout our whole life, nay, even after our death; they show their love, by complying most punctually with the command which God has given them to take care of our salvation. Knowing that nothing renders us more powerful against our enemies, and secures our everlasting happiness better, than prayer, they inspire us with love for prayer; they urge us often to have recourse to prayer, especially in temptation and afflictions; they assist us in

prayer, in order that we may perform it well. And, oh! how happy are the angels when they can carry up our prayers to the throne of God, and bring down for us God's blessings! Behold, says St. John, "an angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel." (Apoc. viii, 3, 4.) How happy we are to have with God such devoted friends! They are not satisfied with bearing our prayers to the throne of God, they also carry there all our good works, such as: charity exercised to the poor and the sick; alms given in secret to poor bashful families; all our mortifications great and small; they even collect all our good desires and thoughts, to present them before God; and ah! who can tell with what joy they offer to God the tears of true contrition for sin, the sufferings endured with humility and patience for the love of God! The Angel Raphael said to Tobias that he had treasured up his alms, his abstinences, and his prayers, like *so much* heavenly perfume, and presented them to God: "When thou didst pray with tears . . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord." (Tobias xii, 12.)

## II.—THE GOOD ANGELS MAKE THE WILL OF GOD KNOWN TO US.

Nothing gives greater pleasure to the angels than to do God's holy will, and to make God's holy will known to men. They have the greatest desire that we should become like unto them, by doing God's will; and our dear

Saviour has taught us to pray that we may do the will of God as the angels do it: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now, whenever the will of God is not sufficiently made known to us, and we pray to God that we may know it, he will direct us by our guardian angel to do what is pleasing to him. An angel of the Lord told the Blessed Virgin Mary that God wished her to become the Mother of his Son. An angel also told St. Joseph that God wished him to take the Infant Jesus and his Mother, and fly into Egypt. (Matt. ii, 13.) It is particularly in the ten commandments that God has made his will known; yet these commandments God gave to Moses through an angel.—There is a young man. He is doubtful about his vocation to the priesthood; he feels uncertain whether it is God's will that he should become a priest, and serve him in that holy state. Let him pray, every day, for some time, to his guardian angel to know the will of God in so important an affair, and the Lord will not fail to direct him through his angel.—There is a young woman. She feels inclined to become a nun, but is not certain whether God calls her to the religious state. Let her say, every day, one *Hail Mary* in honor of her guardian angel, and this good angel will direct her to a good priest, or otherwise make known to her the state of life to which God has called her.

### III.—THE GOOD ANGELS PERFORM MIRACLES FOR US.

The Angel Raphael associated himself with the youthful Tobias when about to start on a long journey, to be his safe guide in all the dangers of the road. In like manner, our guardian angel associates himself with us at

our very entrance into this world, and never abandons us during the whole course of our life. It is impossible, without a special revelation, to know all the dangers from which he rescues us. Who can tell all the dangers that surround our childhood, the vicissitudes that attend our youth and our more advanced age, on account of sickness; the pursuits in which we engage, sudden reverses, or sad, unforeseen accidents? Each one of us remembers many occasions in which he escaped death by an unexpected and almost miraculous interposition of Providence. We often read or hear of people who, in obedience to a certain interior impulse, left the house in which they were, and no sooner had they done so, than the house fell to pieces; of others, who quitted the place which they had occupied, and had just time enough to escape death; of others, who changed their route while travelling, and thus avoided the danger of a highway robber; of others, who stopped all on a sudden, as if by chance, and upon looking around, found themselves standing on the brink of a precipice. Now, to whom was this protection due? Assuredly to the good angels, whose loving eyes are ever watchful and attentive. "The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him, and shall deliver them." (Ps. xxxiii, 8.) The angels encamp round about us, says St. Ambrose, because, by going in advance of us, they induce us to follow their footsteps, and to avoid impending dangers. Witness young Tobias, who says of the Angel Raphael: "He conducted me and brought me safe back. He delivered me from being devoured by the fish; thee, also, he hath made to see the light of heaven; he chased the evil spirit from the wife whom he caused me to have; he gave joy to her parents; and we are filled



with all good things through him." (Tob. xii.) Witness St. Peter, who was delivered from his chains by an angel. (Acts. xii.) "An angel of the Lord, also, by night, opened the doors of the prison, and led the apostles out." (Acts v, 19.) An angel relieved and comforted Agar in her despair. (Gen. xvi, 8.) "The angels of the Lord delivered Lot and his family from the burning of Sodom" (Gen. xxii, 19); and the three children from the flames (Dan. iii, 49): Daniel from the lions (Dan. vi, 22). An angel saved St. Paul, and all who were with him, from shipwreck. (Acts xxvii, 23.) Who is not astonished at these miraculous deeds performed by the angels in favor of men?

#### IV.—THE GOOD ANGELS ARE GUARDIANS OF THE CHURCH, AND OF EACH ONE OF US.

The devils, with implacable hatred and malice, study to effect our eternal ruin, both by stratagems and open assaults. God is pleased to oppose to their efforts his good angels, by making them our defenders. No sooner had Lucifer and his adherents set up the standard of revolt against God, than St. Michael and all the good angels entered upon a war against them, and, executing the sentence which God had passed upon them, expelled them from their blessed abodes. As the devil is the sworn enemy of God's holy Church, St. Michael is her special protector against his assaults and stratagems. In this quality he was the defender of the Jewish synagogue, as we learn from Daniel (xii). He was always so acknowledged by the Hebrews. This holy archangel has ever been honored in the Catholic Church under the same title as her guardian under God, and as the protector of the faithful. According to tradition, he appeared to

Constantine, and said to him: "It was I who, when thou didst battle against the impiety of tyrants, rendered thine arms victorious." Would it not be appropriate to apply to the apparition of Labarum these words of holy liturgy: "*Sed explicat victor crucem Michael, salutis signifer*"?

Still later, it was with the aid of the valiant archangel that St. Leo arrested, at the gates of Rome, those hordes of barbarians that filled Europe and Africa with terror. It was again he, St. Michael, that St. Gregory the Great saw, over the tower of Adrian, replacing his sword in its scabbard, after having stayed the scourge that then desolated the Eternal City. When Boniface, urged forward by the Spirit of God, threw himself upon the plains of Germany, to win back to Jesus Christ that rebellious and ferocious people, it was in the name and under the protection of St. Michael that he overcame every obstacle, and that he established the kingdom of Jesus Christ. When the Saracens threatened the States of the Church, Leo IV announced that he had won a brilliant victory over them by the aid of St. Michael. To express his gratitude, and to hand it down to future generations, he had erected a temple in honor of the chief of the heavenly hosts in the capital of Christendom. It is said of this special guardian and protector of the Church that, in the persecution of Antichrist, he will powerfully stand up in her defence: "At that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan. xi, 1.) God is pleased to employ the zeal and charity of the good angels and their leader to oppose the malicious assaults of the devil.

As guardians of each one of us, the angels watch with tender care over the preservation of our body, our health, and our life, which are exposed to so many dangers.

They take still greater care of our immortal souls, and of our spiritual interests; they teach us, put good thoughts into our minds, show us the dangers prepared for us, encourage and sustain us in our temptations, reprove us for our faults, and draw us by gentle inspirations to perform our duties, and to return to God, if we should have lost him by grievous sins. They assist us, especially at the hour of death, conduct our souls to purgatory, console them there, and finally lead them into heaven. Most assuredly, among the most precious gifts of God's mercy to men, we should reckon that communion, or spiritual intercourse, which the Lord has established between us and the holy angels, and the command which he has given to these blessed spirits to take care of each one of us: "He hath given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. xc, 11.)

## 20. What is our duty towards the guardian angels?

*We should often think of them, place confidence in them, and pray to them.*

We owe to our guardian angels reverence, confidence and gratitude. It is God himself who commands us to show reverence for our guardian angels. "Behold," said our Lord to Moses, "I will send my angel who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. *Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned, for my name is in him.*" (Exod. xxiii, 21.) Of such excellence and dignity is the guardian angel, that he is the vivid expression of the Divinity. He is the first ray of God's beauty, the first work of his hands, the first production of his omnipotence, the first masterpiece

of his wisdom. St. John, upon seeing him, fell prostrate to adore him, thinking he was the Son of God himself. St. Anselm assures us that, if an angel could make himself visible in all his glory in place of the sun, the light of the latter would altogether disappear in the light and splendor of the angel. The majesty of a mortal king impresses respect on all those who approach him: with what reverence, then, should we not be filled in the presence of this prince of heaven! Now, the best manner of showing this reverence in presence of our guardian angels is, as the catechism says, often to think of them, often to remember their presence. "Wherever you may be," says St. Bernard, "in the church, at home, on a journey, in public or private places, your angel is near you. Do not do before him what you would not dare to do before me."

To reverence, we must join confidence in our guardian angels. We should show confidence in their protection. If we had a friend who appeared to us the most enlightened, the most faithful, and the most powerful of all men, what confidence would we place in him! Now, such friends are the guardian angels, says St. Bernard: "They are wise, faithful and powerful." They cannot be deceived, drawing, as they do, their light from God himself. Much less can they deceive us. They are friends of tried fidelity. Their power is beyond conception. One of them alone can do more for our salvation than all the demons can do to ruin us. One of the chief duties towards the guardian angels which is neglected almost by all men, is the duty of gratitude for the numberless blessings, spiritual and temporal, which God bestows upon us by his holy angels. After the angel of the Hebrew people had divided the waters of the Red Sea, to make a dry passage for them, he continued



to assist them, by the order of God, until he had introduced them into the land of promise. It is thus that our guardian angels act towards us. After we have escaped, by the waters of baptism, the powers of hell, these zealous and charitable protectors accompany us through the dreary desert of this life which we must traverse to arrive at the abode of eternal happiness. Sometimes, like a refreshing cloud, our guardian angels temper the ardor of our passions ; sometimes, like a column of fire, they enlighten us in the night of sin. If necessary, they let fall the manna of heavenly consolations, to sweeten the bitter waters of penitence and afflictions of our lives. They make us hear the law of God, and endeavor to engrave it on the living table of our hearts. It is to the Lord, it is true, that we are indebted for all these blessings ; for we would not have guardian angels, had not our dear Lord given them to us. "He hath given his angels charge over thee." Glory to God who gave them this command ! But we owe, also, much to those who execute it, especially as they unite to their obedience an admirable charity. If they had a life to offer, and blood to shed, for our salvation, they would willingly give up all. Let us never be ungrateful towards such friends. How should we be grateful to them ? By listening to their words and following their inspirations ; by avoiding what would wound the sanctity of their presence ; by practising the virtues so dear to them : purity, humility, zeal, charity, and conformity to the will of God. "If thou wilt hear his voice," said the Lord to Moses, "and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and I will afflict them that afflict thee." (Exod. xxiii, 22.)

Finally, we should also pray to our guardian angels. The good angels often intercede for us, and obtain for us many

graces through their prayers. The Patriarch Jacob entreated most earnestly the angel with whom he had wrestled, that he would give him his blessing (Gen. xxxii, 26); and on his death-bed he prayed the angel who had conducted and protected him, to bless his grandchildren, Ephraim and Manasses. (Gen. xlvi, 16.) The Prophet Daniel was informed in his visions how vigorously the guardian angel of Persia interposed in favor of that country, and what good offices St. Michael and other angels did for the Jews, in removing obstacles which retarded their return from the captivity. The Angel Gabriel told Daniel that he had exerted his efforts for this purpose in Persia twenty-one days, and that St. Michael, the prince or guardian of the Jews, came to his help (Dan. x, 13), so that they conquered the impediments. The Angel Gabriel added: "From the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up that he might be strengthened and confirmed" (Dan. xi, 1), viz.: to promote the deliverance of God's people. The same prophet, speaking of the cruel persecution of Antiochus, says: "At that time Michael shall rise up, the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan. xii, 1.) This implies that St. Michael would support the Machabees, and other defenders of God's people, whose protector he was, by standing up for them, that is, by praying for them.

The Prophet Zacharias was favored with a vision of angels, in the seventieth year of the desolation of Jerusalem. The prophet saw an angel (probably St. Michael), in the shape of a man, standing in a grove of myrtle trees; and several angels, the guardians of other princes, came to him and said: "We have walked through the earth, and behold, all the earth is inhabited, and is at rest." Then

the angel made this prayer: "O Lord of hosts! how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Juda, with which thou hast been angry? This is now the seventieth year." (Zach. i, 12.) The Lord answered his prayer: he told the angel that he would return to Jerusalem in mercy, and that his house should be built in it. From these examples, and other passages of Holy Scripture, it is clear that the good angels pray for us. The Church has always invoked the holy angels and paid religious honor to them; and teaches that it is an article of faith that their patronage is piously invoked. Let us entertain a great devotion to our guardian angels. We read, in the lives of many saints, that their lively faith and tender devotion towards their guardian angels obtained for them the grace of seeing and conversing familiarly with them. We find this especially in the lives of St. Camillus, St. Philip Neri, St. Frances of Rome, St. Rose of Lima, St. Lidwina of Holland. If we recommend ourselves often to them, we shall experience their ardent charity, their wonderful protection, and the miraculous effects of their prayers on many occasions. The great Prophet Isaias had no sooner complained that his lips were defiled, than a seraph purified them with a burning coal from the altar. (Isa. vi.) If the blessings which God has bestowed upon every one through his guardian angel were to be written down, they would fill a large volume. These blessings will become greater and far more numerous from the time that we begin to be more grateful and more devout to the guardian angel. Often repeat this prayer, indulgenced by Pius VI and Pius VII: "Holy angel, to whose care I am committed, enlighten, protect, direct, and govern me this day!"

### III.—ADAM AND EVE, OUR FIRST PARENTS.

#### **1. Who were the first man and the first woman created by God?**

*The first man was Adam, and the first woman was Eve, and from them all men have descended.*

A king is not introduced into his palace until everything in it is so arranged as to render his reception honorable. It is thus that God acted towards man. He created the world as a palace or grand residence for man. Hence he did not create him until the world was ready to receive him.

Now, when an artist is about to begin a work of art, he first reflects and deliberates about it. God acted in the same manner when he was about to create man. When he created the light, the sun, and the moon, and the animals, he merely said, Let it be done, and it was done: "Let there be light, and there was light." But when man was to be created, the three divine persons seemed to consult together: and now God does not merely say, Let there be man; he says, "Let us make man to our own image and likeness." And why did God take counsel with himself when about to create man? It was to let us see that the work which he was to perform surpassed everything done by him up that time, that man is above all his works, and that, of all created beings of this world, he is the noblest and the most favored. When God had created man, he called



him Adam. (Gen. v, 2.) God also created for Adam a companion, called Eve. From them all men have descended ; for, when God created man, he created mankind. In that man the whole race of mankind was contained. Adam and Eve had children, and those children grew up and became parents, whom God blessed with other children ; and so on, from generation to generation, the human race was multiplied and has been propagated to our time. All the inhabitants of this world, then, have descended from Adam and Eve, no matter how much they differ in color and in appearance. The difference in color and in appearance among nations is to be attributed to climate, peculiar habits and mode of life. "The great difference between white people and negroes," says Buffon, "would go very far to prove that they were not descended from the same stock, had we not known this cause of the dark color of many of the inhabitants of this world. The heat of the climate is the principal cause of the black colors of the negroes. When the heat is excessive, as in Senegal and Guinea, the natives are altogether black. When the heat is not so intense, as on the eastern coast of Africa, the natives are not so dark. When, again, the heat is less glowing, as in Barbary, Mogul, Arabia, North America, the natives are merely of a copper color. In Europe, and in a part of Asia, the heat being more temperate, the natives are white. Everything goes to prove that the human race is not composed of races essentially different from one another ; but, on the contrary, that originally there had been but one race, which, having been multiplied and spread over the whole surface of the globe, has undergone various changes, arising from climates, habits, and mode of living."

## 2. How did God create the first man?

*God made a body of the slime of the earth, and breathed into it a living soul, created to his own image and likeness. (Gen. i, 27 ; ii, 7.)*

As God destined man to live among corporal beings, he gave him a body ; and as God also destined man to serve and praise him, he gave him a soul. Now, to form the body of man, God took the slime of the earth, and in his hand it became a most beautiful and lovely figure. The slime of the earth was changed into flesh, into blood, into nerves, forming that admirable body which we possess ; that open countenance, which is capable of so many varied expressions ; that noble forehead, which indicates genius and intelligence ; those eyes, in which, as in a mirror, are distinctly represented millions of objects ; that majestic carriage, which makes man respected by all other created animals : and yet all this has been produced from the slime of the earth. O ! how admirable is God in his works ! But these are not the only wonders of the creation of man. "God, having formed man of the slime of the earth, breathed on his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen. ii, 7.) This breath of God was a spiritual, intelligent and active substance ; it was a spirit, a soul, which God made out of nothing, and which he created to his image and likeness ; a soul capable of knowing, loving and freely acting ; a soul giving movement and life to our body.

## 3. How did God create the first woman ?

*God made the first woman out of a rib of Adam.*

After God had made man, he said : "It is not good for man to be alone : let us make him a help like unto himself.

Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam, and, when he was fast asleep, God took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman, and brought her to Adam. And Adam said: This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." And Adam called the name of his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. (Gen. ii, 21-23.) As to the formation of Eve, here seems to have been the same sort of scheme, so to speak, in the divine mind, as we read of in the case of Adam's creation. The reason is clear. Adam is said to have been created "in the image of God." Now, this applies to Eve also ; so that she, too, bore the divine image. But there is still a difference between Adam and Eve in this respect: in Adam, the divine image shone forth in a way peculiar to himself. For, just as God is the first beginning and ultimate end of man, so the man is the immediate beginning and immediate end of the woman ; for, from man and for man was the woman created, as we read in the second chapter of Genesis. Thus it follows that man has dominion over the whole of nature, not excepting woman. St. Paul alludes to this secondary likeness of man to God when he says: "The man indeed ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God ; but the woman is the glory of man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. For the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man." (1 Cor. xi, 7-9.) Thus we see that woman, even in her state of innocence, was in subjection to man, being made for him as his helper, and as the means for the propagation of the human race. "There is," says St. Thomas, "a twofold subjection—one servile, according

to which the superior makes use of the subject for his own advantage; and of this kind was the subjection introduced after sin. But there is another subjection, economic and civil, according to which, the superior makes use of those subject to him for their advantage and good: and such a subjection existed before sin. For the good of order would have been wanting in a human multitude, if some were not governed by others of greater wisdom. And thus, with a subjection of this sort, the woman is naturally subject to the man, because, naturally, man is gifted with greater prudence. The inequality of man is not excluded by a state of innocence." (Summa, p. i, q. 92, a. 1.)

Moreover, the formation by God of Eve out of Adam's rib symbolizes the indissolubility of marriage—that one man should be joined to one woman, and that, till death: "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." It shows us, too, how great should be the holiness of the married state, and the great love that should unite husband and wife; that they should have, as it were, but one soul and one will. "It was fitting," says St. Thomas, "that the woman should be formed from the man: first, in order that the first man might preserve his dignity; that, after the similitude of God, he might be the beginning of his entire species, as God is the beginning of the entire universe; as St. Paul says: 'God has made of one all mankind.' Secondly, to increase the love of man for woman, knowing that she was produced from him. Therefore is it said in Genesis: 'She was taken from man; wherefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.'" (Summa, p. i, q. 92, a. 2.) Furthermore, there is prefigure the regeneration of the world, in its first creation. After five days of waiting, of prepara-



tion, of preliminary creations, God made the first man "from the slime of the earth, earthly. In him he joined, in one human person, two different substances: the one properly belonging to angels; the other to animals, mind and body. He then appointed him master and lord of all the creatures that people the air, the earth, and the waters. After he had finished this creation of the head of human nature, he completed it by the formation of Eve, drawn from his bosom; and by this addition the human race was created so as to live and perpetuate itself, with all its misery and destitution. In the same manner, after a series of five thousand years (according to the Septuagint), after these five long days devoted to the announcement, the figures, the preparations and the preliminaries of his arrival, the new Adam appeared, "come down from heaven and heavenly." In him also two natures, the divine and the human, are joined together, in the one person of God the Son. He is appointed King of angels and of men. Afterwards his incarnation, in a certain sense, is finished, carried out in its fulness, by the formation of the Church, his spouse, who is drawn from his side, opened for us on the cross; and by the incorporation of the faithful into Jesus Christ in the bosom of the Church, Christianity is complete—it lives, it grows, it gives life to the earth, and peoples heaven.

#### 4. What, then, is man?

*Man is a being composed of a body and a soul, and, after the angels, the most perfect creature of God.*

Man is a being composed of two parts: body and soul. The soul, being the image of God, distinguishes man from the inferior animals. These have not the image of God,

but rather what the fathers call a "*vestigium*," an indication of origin. They represent God only in a certain qualified sense, viz., as the effect represents the cause; for their nature, habits, instincts, association with one another, point to the divine Author of their being. But in no strict sense are they in the image of God. Man differs from the animal, because the animal has neither soul nor reason. Nobody ever heard of a cow building a house, or a steamboat, or a railroad; neither did any one ever hear somebody reading a book to a horse or to a dog, because these creatures have neither soul nor understanding. On man alone is impressed the image of God in a most wonderful manner. Man, therefore, is not a mere animal, made simply for this world. We often meet with a sort of men who impiously assert that they have no soul. The reply to be made to such men is simply this: If you say you have no soul, you must consider yourselves simply animals; and since you are pleased to be animals, you had better go and live with the class of beings to which you belong. If you are travelling, do not take the passenger train, which is intended for men who have a soul; but take the cattle train. If you are invited to a dinner, go and take it with that class of animals to which you belong; but do not take it with men, whose dignity is but a little inferior to that of the angels.

### 5. How is man God's image?

*Man is God's image, because his soul has understanding and free will—is a spirit and immortal, like God.*

It has already been said that God has no body, no eyes, no hands, no feet, but is a spirit, possessing, in an eminent manner, thought, will, understanding, and every kind of

spiritual perfection. Now, when God said, "Let us make man to our own image and likeness," he could not mean: "Let us make man—both his body and soul—to our image and likeness," because God has no body; he could only mean, "Let us make the soul of man to our own image and likeness." The image of God, then, is not in the body, but in the soul of man. The soul, like God, is one; yet there are three great powers in the soul—understanding, free will and memory; as there are three persons in God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost. By means of the understanding, man thinks, deliberates, and reasons like God. The soul thinks. The thoughts of the soul can pass in a moment up to heaven and down to hell, through the length and breadth of the earth, and down to the lowest parts of it. The thoughts of the soul can call back the years that are past, and can reach things in the far future, when the last day of this world shall be over, and eternity shall have begun. By means of the understanding, man can learn languages, build churches, palaces, great cities, steamboats; count days, dates, distances, money, and, above all, he can know and love God.

The soul has a will, and, like God, it can say, "I will, or I will not." There is a man. He beats his neighbor, and is sentenced to be imprisoned for a month, because he was not obliged to beat his neighbor; he could do so or not, as he liked, because he has free will. But if a stone falls from a building and hurts a man, the stone is not imprisoned, because it has no will.

The soul, like God, is a spirit. The soul is not like those things which can be seen. We may say, I saw the President of the United States, I saw the city of New York, I saw the ocean; but nobody ever said, I saw my

soul, because the soul is a spirit which cannot be seen by the eyes. The soul cannot wear away like stones; it cannot fade away like a flower, or as the colors of the rainbow melt away from our sight. The soul will not be nailed down in a coffin, or buried in the grave. When the body dies, the soul will not die, but it will return to God who gave it. (Eccl. xii.) St. Luke tells us that our dear Saviour raised the dead body of the daughter of Jairus to life again. He does not say that Jesus raised her soul to life again; but he says that her soul returned from the other world. (Luke viii.) The soul, like God, is immortal; it will, like God, live for ever and ever. The image of God is so indelibly impressed on man's nature, that he cannot lose it. Sin can obscure it, but never destroy it, because it cannot destroy man's nature. God alone can, but never will, destroy the soul. He has told us, ever so many times, that the soul will live for ever and ever. "The wicked," says Jesus Christ, "shall be condemned to eternal punishment, but the just shall enter into life everlasting."

#### **6. In what state were our first parents in the beginning?**

*Their souls were endowed with the grace of God, and free from all inclinations to evil, and their bodies were not subject to sufferings and death.*

We have just seen that God distinguished man, at his creation, from all other creatures, by creating him to his own image. We have seen that the image of God is in the soul—the soul being an immortal spirit like God, and possessing understanding and free will like God. These gifts are called natural gifts, and are essential to man's nature. To these essential attributes of man's nature,



God, in his infinite love, added supernatural gifts, which were not essential to man's nature, but were extraordinary free gifts of God. Almighty God, then, instead of placing man in the valley of tears, gave him a delightful abode in paradise, and there manifested himself to him. Instead of leaving his understanding to a laborious search after truth, he conversed familiarly with him, to enlighten him by his brightest illuminations. Instead of allowing his heart to remain exposed to all the caprices of a liberty solicited by unworthy passions, he infused into it the pure love of the infinite and eternal Good, without at the same time depriving it of free will. Instead of exposing man's unprotected body to all the attacks of inanimate matter, he supplied a remedy against death, besides that which food affords against hunger: to the image of his own Being, God added a resemblance to himself; that is, he infused into the souls of Adam and Eve, at the first instant of their creation, sanctifying grace and original justice, together with all the theological and moral virtues. This supernatural state in which man was thus originally created, was what the apostle calls, "the new man created according to God in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv, 24); what Holy Scripture calls, "the likeness of man to God;" and what the Council of Trent calls, "the constitution of man in sanctity and justice." By this supernatural state all the faculties of man were made much more excellent than they are now. His mind was enlightened by the *spiritual knowledge* which was infused into him by the word of God. (Ecclus. xvii, 6.) His will was perfectly regulated and in order, submissive to God, the undisturbed mistress of the senses, established in profound peace, unacquainted with shame or with remorse.

{Gen. ii, 25). His body had been created *incorruptible*, that is to say, it was secured from that dissolution called death. (Wisd. ii, 23.) His whole being was protected by the sanctity of his soul against the innumerable pains, afflictions and miseries which make this earth a prison and a place of exile.

By the gifts of sanctifying grace and original justice, God established a most perfect sonship between himself and man,—a sonship which required the presence of the Father; so that God was intimately united to the soul of man, and resided in it as in his temple, there to be worshipped, as in his palace, there to be honored, as on his throne, there to be loved and praised, there to manifest himself to man, to hear and receive his worship, praise and prayer, and to hold sweet communion with him. Our first parents were thus raised to the highest dignity,—to the dignity of divine sonship, so that, in reality, they were the children of God; yea, even gods, as it were, not only accidentally by grace, but also really by participation in the divine nature. God, by thus communicating himself to them, raised them, as it were, to a level with himself, transforming them into himself, and thus making them, as it were, divine.

O how beautiful was the soul of man in the state of sanctifying grace and original justice! Indeed, it was purer than silver, and brighter than the finest gold. It was a lovely and radiant star in the hand of the Most High. It was more beautiful than all that was beautiful in nature. How beautiful is the sweet light of morning, how beautiful are the varied tints of the rainbow! but the soul of Adam was more beautiful. The dazzling beams of the noonday sun are bright indeed, but the light that

beamed from the soul of Adam was far brighter. The silvery stars glitter brightly in the dark-blue sky, but the soul of man endowed with sanctifying grace glittered far more brightly. The spring lily and the fresh-fallen snow look white and pure, but the purity of Adam was far whiter; for it was white with the purity of heaven.

There is a sublime and awful beauty in the rolling thunder, and in the vivid lightning, as it flashes through the dark clouds; but there was something far more sublime and awful in the beauty of Adam's soul. There was in her a majesty on which even the angels gazed with fear and delight. So marvellously beautiful was his soul in the light of sanctifying grace and justice, that Adam could exclaim, Thou, my God, art mine and I am thine; I live, feel, and rejoice in thee alone: for his soul was the living image and likeness of the living God.

All visible creatures were obedient to our first parents, and ministered to their pleasures. "Let him" (man), said God, "have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. i, 26.) The birds obeyed their bidding; they gladdened their ears with their melodious harmony. Each returning season was to bring with it a new variety of pleasures; every morning they awoke to a new day of joys, which they spent in songs of praise, ascending in concert with the warbling of the birds to their God. The setting sun invited them to a sweet and calm repose. Man thus enjoyed a perpetual inward peace, rectitude and holiness, undisturbed by any inordinate grief, anger, or other unruly passion. It is especially on account of these supernatural gifts that man is said to have been made, not

only to the image, but also to the likeness of God: "Let us make man to our image and likeness." (Gen. i, 26.) And what was more than all this, in bestowing those gifts upon man, the Creator designed to prepare him for his translation from that scene of earthly bliss in order to put him in possession of delights still far sweeter, of pleasures still far more substantial, of a life divine still far more perfect,—the enjoyment of himself.

**7. Were the descendants of Adam to be born in this happy state?**

*Yes; on condition that Adam remained obedient to Almighty God.*

In the beginning, when God made man, he made him sinless, and gave him the light of the Holy Spirit; so that man knew God, knew his holiness and perfections. He knew himself and the nature in which God had created him; he knew the law of God, and the condition upon which the continuation of his happiness, for time and eternity, depended: he knew that it depended on his obedience to the will of God. He knew that it was entirely left in his power to remain free from irregular affections and unruly passions, and to transmit his happiness to his posterity. He knew that he would receive the crown of life everlasting, on condition that he should make a right use of his liberty, by following always the law of God, by preserving unsullied the image and likeness of his Creator, and by making a proper use of the creatures confided to his care. Finally he knew that, by swerving, even for a moment, from this loving will of God, he would place himself and his posterity under the law of God's justice, which would not fail to inflict the threatened punishment upon him and all



his descendants. All mankind were to share in Adam's happiness, on condition that he persevered in obedience to God.

**8. Where did God place Adam and Eve when he had created them?**

*God placed them in a beautiful garden, called paradise, whence he promised to take them to heaven, if they remained obedient to him.*

The state of incorruption in which man was created, was not natural to him; *i. e.*, it did not belong essentially to his nature—it was but a supernatural gift of God like so many others; and in order that this might not be imputed to human nature, but to God's grace alone, God created man out of paradise. He then placed him *in* paradise, there to dwell during his terrestrial life, and afterwards to be translated to heaven. The whole earth was given to him to occupy; yet a part of it, a particular place, was especially prepared for him. It was not enough that the creative word caused the earth to bring forth its herbs and fruits—a stronger personal agency is recorded of the Creator for man's accommodation: “And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning, wherein he placed man whom he had formed.” (Gen. ii, S.)

This garden was called paradise, a word signifying a fruit garden or orchard. It is also called the garden of Eden, because it was situated in Eden, a province of the East, near the sources of the Euphrates, Tigris, Nile, and Ganges. From the middle of this garden flowed a sparkling spring, which separated into four streams and watered the whole of it: “And a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise, which from thence is divided

into four heads." (Gen. ii.) Every thing grand and beautiful in the world was found there: a serene, smiling sky over it; an agreeable variety of hill and dale, charming scenes and lovely views, trees of every kind, charged with delicious fruit, and exhaling sweet perfumes. Primitive nature displayed all her rich ornaments and unfolded her vast resources in paradise. All the advantages of the four seasons were experienced at one and the same time. There was no burning sun to scorch and make the land sterile, nor was there any winter's cold to chill its fruitfulness. In a word, this paradise, or garden of Eden, was enriched, by the special care of Almighty God, with the choicest of external goods. It was not to be the only part of the earth for man's abode, but his place of special enjoyment.

In this we may see an important meaning. Why was there a special home provided for man in this manner? For the same reason that God distinguished one day from another, especially the seventh day, though all days were good, and ever to be sanctified. So, also, for the same reason, God wished that this place should be considered more holy than another for man's spiritual and temporal welfare.

This paradise, then, we are to look upon as the sanctuary of the world, the inner part of the tabernacle, which at first was coexistent with the world.

There was to be a special manifestation of God's presence there. The Lord God, as Scripture tells us, walked amidst the trees of the garden, and his voice was heard there. Elsewhere man would, of course, be in the presence of God, who is everywhere; but *here* that presence would be specially manifested to him. Here, too, were outward

and visible objects, which brought the thought of God to his mind, and acted not only on his understanding, but conveyed also to him a real spiritual communication. The *tree of life* was in the middle of the garden. That tree was different from all other trees in regard to its effect on man, as is clear from the words of God himself: "Lest perhaps he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever." (Gen. iii, 22.) It was, then, a sacramental tree: *i. e.*, the visible fruit was the means of conveying to man a renewal of life, preserved him free from disease, strengthened him, and kept away sadness.

St. Thomas says: "The tree of life was so called, because it had the virtue of preserving life. It also signified the promise of eternal life, which Adam was to acquire by his obedience."

They were nourished, therefore, by the other trees of which they partook, lest their bodies should suffer in any way from hunger and thirst; but the reason they partook of the tree of life was, lest death should come upon them, or they should perish by lapse of time from old age. Just as the other trees were for food, so this was as a sacrament.

By this tree, so far as it was sacramental and a symbol of eternal or celestial life, Adam was taught that life lay outside of himself, and, once obtained, would completely keep away death, and render him incorruptible; that that life was to be sought in God, who has in himself life unchangeable; that that life was the true food of the soul, which does not perish, which transforms into itself those who partake of it, and renders them immortal, but is not transformed into them, as is the case with fleshly food.

Moreover, it is right to consider that, by this symbol, the Son of God was manifested to Adam as the author of life.

For he, in various passages, is signified under the analogous name of *tree of life*: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John i, 4); "I am the way, the truth and the life" (xiv, 6); "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world" (vi, 51, 52). This virtue, moreover, was not *supernatural*, but natural to the tree, just as a healing virtue even now is inherent in certain herbs; so that, after the fall, the tree still retained its restorative power, and, for that reason, Adam after his sin was driven from the garden, lest he should eat of it. Had he remained faithful, the eating of the fruit of this tree would have kept him in a state of immortality; and so he would have continued, till God removed him to heaven without the process of dying.

As the virtue of every body is finite, so the virtue of the tree of life was finite, and could not extend so far as to give to the body the power of lasting an infinite time, but only a determined time. So that the fruit of this tree, when partaken of once, preserved from corruption for a definite time; at the end of which, man would either have been translated to a spiritual life, or he would have again needed to eat of the tree of life.

St. Bonaventure says: "As it is not our sacraments that create grace, but the divine virtue, which, helping them in their legitimate reception, infuses grace; so the fruit of that tree did not bestow immortality, but the divine virtue, when that fruit was eaten, conferred on man immortality." (In 2<sup>a</sup> sentent., dist. xvii.) The great probability is, that Adam did never eat of the tree of life. St. Anselm says that Adam was only seven hours in paradise before he sinned,



because, no sooner was woman created, than she prevaricated. (Elucidarium, c. xiv.)

### 9. How did God try the obedience of our first parents ?

*He forbade them to eat of the fruit of a certain tree, but they were disobedient, and ate of the forbidden fruit.*

After God had placed man in paradise, he gave him to understand that he was created unto a state of probation. This is evident from the fact that a prohibition was immediately given him: "And God commanded man, saying: Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat; but of the tree of knowledge and evil thou shalt not eat; for, in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." Almighty God gave this command to our first parents, to show them that he was their Lord and Master; that, though he had made them lords and masters of the creation, yet they had no right over the created things, unless granted to them by him. He wished to give them an opportunity to acknowledge their dependence on him, and to merit, by their obedience and fidelity, a continuation of his favors here below, and of eternal happiness hereafter. By this command of not eating the forbidden fruit, God also wished to give Adam the full consciousness of his moral liberty; for, from the moment he received this command, Adam understood clearly that he was at perfect liberty to do good or evil. And for this reason, the tree, of the fruit of which he was forbidden to eat, is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for, wherever there is a precept of God, *there* is the knowledge of good or evil manifested by obedience or disobedience. The precept sets forth the two: "Obey, and have the good; disobey, and have the evil." This tree of good and evil

expressed to man the law or will of God ; it was an outward, visible object to remind him of that prohibition, of his dependence upon Almighty God, of his duty, not to follow his own inclination in all things, but to respect every word that came out of the mouth of God.

When Adam received the command not to eat the forbidden fruit, Eve had not yet been created ; for it seems probable, from the words of Holy Scripture relating to the formation of Eve, that she was not created in the same place as Adam, but that she was made by God from Adam's rib in paradise, and then brought to Adam after he was placed there. But before Eve sinned, she was made fully aware of God's prohibition, and the importance of complying with it. God gave Adam dominion over every tree of the garden, except one only. Such was the generosity of God. He did not say : "Thou mayest eat of the fruit of that one tree, of the ten thousand other fruit-bearing trees of the garden thou shalt not eat ; and in whatsoever day thou eatest of them, thou shalt die the death." God did not, with the parsimony of a human heart, give Adam permission to eat of one tree, and forbid him ten thousand. No ; he gave him permission to eat of ten thousand, and forbade him to eat of only one. What could be more generous ? Was it not what we would do, had we the will to try the obedience of any one ? Was it not what we would do, and what men do at this day, when, out of liberality, they lease their lands upon what is called "a peppercorn rent" ? The landlord who leases out his estate, taking only a nominal acknowledgment, is commended by all men as generous, large-hearted, noble-minded. He acts as a friend, without self-interest, when he intrusts to another man the enjoyment and enrichment

which arise from his estates, upon the mere acknowledgment that, after all, they belong to him. He is only reserving his right. Now, what did Almighty God enjoin by that commandment? He reserved his right as Sovereign—he reserved his right over the obedience of the man whom he had created. He thereby revealed that he had jurisdiction over that garden, and over the man to whom he had permitted its free enjoyment. He put him upon trial—it was the test of his fidelity. More than this: it was a test so slight, that we may say there was no temptation to break the law. Adam held the enjoyment of his perfection, and of the promise of eternal life, and of the kingdom of God, upon the payment of that quit-rent, of that mere acknowledgment of the sovereignty of his Maker. But to this he did not submit. He and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit.

#### **10. Who tempted our first parents to eat the forbidden fruit?**

*The devil, in the shape of a serpent, persuaded Eve to eat of it, and she gave it to her husband to eat.*

Lucifer and his angels fell, not through the temptation of another, but through their own proud will. But our first parents did not fall in this manner. They fell through the treachery and deception of a superior being. Although, in the account of man's fall, there is no express mention made of the evil being who caused it, but only of the visible form in which he masked himself, yet that it was Satan, we know from Holy Scripture. (Apoc. xii, 9.) It may be that Adam and Eve were not aware who the tempter was. However, as they possessed perfect knowledge, they must at least have wondered at hearing the

animal speak. St. Thomas says that Eve did so wonder, and at the same time partly suspected that it was done by a higher power, whether angelical or diabolical. Afraid she was not, for she had not as yet sinned, and knew also that she was under God's special care. (Sum., p. i, q. 94, a. 4.) No doubt, before sin the devil had the least possible power over man. He knew that man was not inwardly inclined to evil, and that on this account it would be useless for him to suggest evil thoughts and desires in any other way than by assuming an outward form, especially as he was at the same time under the control of Almighty God. He also knew that it would be in vain for him to appear in his own character, for Adam and Eve would not have yielded to so professed an enemy of God. He therefore was constrained to assume a neutral character, and so appeared under the form of a serpent.

Now, if we ask why Satan chose that form, the reason seems to be this: "The serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made." As differences of disposition are exhibited in different animals, so cunning is exhibited and symbolized in the serpent; just as a lion is the symbol of strength and fearlessness. Satan, being constrained to assume an outward form, was forced to adopt that form, because it was the only one that God permitted him to assume as being symbolical of his own character, and expressive of the work which he was now commencing.

Now, Satan did not attack Adam; he tempted Eve, because he saw that her allegiance to God was weaker, and therefore promised himself an easy victory. So, one day, Satan, in the shape of a serpent, twined himself round the forbidden tree as Eve was standing near it, and said:



“Why has God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of the garden?” Eve foolishly allowed herself to be drawn into a conversation with the serpent, and answered: “We are allowed to eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; only of the fruit of this tree in the middle of the garden, God has commanded that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die.”

“No,” answered the serpent; “you shall not die the death; for God doth know that, in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods knowing good and evil.” (Gen. iii, 1-5.) Eve listened with pleasure to this deceitful language, and swallowed its poison. She looked at the tree. The fruit looked lovely, “good to eat,” “fair to the eye,” “delightful to behold.” The more she looked at it, the more delicious it appeared to her; and she doubted not that it was as delicious to the taste as it was pleasing to the eye. She forgot God’s command not to eat of it; she stretched out her hand, she took it and ate of it. She went immediately to Adam and gave him some of it, who also ate of it; and thus both transgressed the command of God in paradise. Adam and Eve believed the words of the serpent, who promised them omniscience and immortality if they ate of the forbidden tree. They were blinded by pride on hearing the serpent’s words: “You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Adam believed the serpent rather than God, who had said: “In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.”

“If, in this transgression,” says St. Thomas, “we look at the sin in itself, Eve sinned most grievously, both because she was the first to *sin*, and because she led Adam into sin, and so was the ruin of herself and him, and of

us all ; but if we look at the circumstance of the *person*, it appears that Adam sinned most grievously, both because he was more perfect and more prudent than Eve, and because Adam had received the precept immediately from God, whereas Eve had received it only mediately, that is, through Adam." (Sum. ii, p. 2, q. 163, a. 4.)

### **11. Did God punish Adam and Eve for their disobedience ?**

*Yes ; God punished Adam and Eve in body and soul.*

Satan had promised to Adam and Eve that they would obtain the knowledge of good and evil by eating of the forbidden fruit. The knowledge of good and evil is in itself a benefit ; indeed, it is an attribute of God and of high spiritual beings : " Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil ;" and as was said to Daniel : " My Lord is like an angel of God, to know good and evil." Adam knew, indeed, before, that obedience was good, and disobedience evil ; just as we know that health is a good thing, and sickness an evil thing, before we experience it. But as a person who, by taking poison, experiences the difference of health and sickness, and thus gains a more accurate knowledge of both, so, in like manner, Adam experienced more clearly the difference between good and evil, by eating of the forbidden tree. This tree was indeed, for him, a tree of the knowledge of good and evil ; for Adam learned by bitter experience, after his sin, how good obedience was, and how evil, disobedience. For, no sooner had Adam and Eve transgressed the commandment of God, than they found out, to their greatest sorrow, the evil they had done. They received light from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but it was a light only to see the misery into which they had

fallen. Guilt produces shame. They blushed at what they had not before observed. Their peace of mind is destroyed. Paradise is for them no longer a garden of pleasure. The thought of what they have done follows them everywhere; every thing they look at seems to reproach them for their unfaithfulness to God. They heard the voice of God walking in the garden: it was for them no longer a voice of peace and joy; it was a voice of terror in their ears. They ran off, and, trembling with fear, hid themselves among the trees, being persuaded that God would not fail to punish them in body and soul.

## 12. What was the punishment of the soul?

1, *The loss of God's grace and all right to heaven*; 2, *darkness in the understanding*; 3, *weakness in the will, and strong inclination to evil.*

1. Whilst Adam and Eve were hiding themselves among the trees, God called Adam by name, and asked him, "Where art thou?" "I heard thy voice in the garden," said Adam trembling, "and I was afraid, because I was naked, and hid myself." "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" said God. "Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?" Adam laid the blame on Eve, and said: "Eve, whom thou gavest me for my companion, gave me of the fruit of the tree, and I did eat." God called Eve, and said to her: "Why didst thou do this?" Eve, in like manner, cast the blame on the serpent, saying: "The serpent deceived me, and I did eat." God now inflicted on Adam and Eve the severest penalties. The greatest of those penalties were those inflicted on the soul.

One day a gallant ship was sailing over the ocean

homeward-bound, laden with costly ware, with silver and gold and precious stones. The sky was bright, the wind was fair, and the ship sped on swiftly as a sea-bird. All on board were happy, for they were nearing the port—their long and perilous voyage was almost at an end. But suddenly the heavens grew dark, a fierce storm arose, the winds howled madly around the vessel, which was hurried on until it was dashed against a rock. The wild, surging waves rushed over it, and it sank with all its costly treasures—sank, with all on board, far down into the depths of the sea. Next day the storm died away, the heavens were bright, and the sea became smooth again, but the ship appeared no more; only a few broken planks were to be seen floating here and there on the surface of the water. Such is the story of Adam and Eve. Before they sinned they were rich beyond measure. God had said: “In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.” The result of the transgression is stated to have been: “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they perceived themselves to be naked.” That, then, is an indication of the *death* having taken place,—the loss of original justice and integrity; and the “nakedness” implies a sense of that loss. Hitherto they had been satisfied with their state before God; now they felt the defect which existed in their very nature. Sin had stripped them of the grace of God, and of all the supernatural gifts which accompanied it. From being the children of God, they became the children of the devil. From being the temple of God, their souls became the abode of Satan. From being the familiar friends of God, they became the enemies of God. From being heirs to heaven, they became liable to eternal damnation. They



were dead to God, and only alive to Satan: "In what day soever thou shalt eat of the forbidden fruit, thou shalt die the death." God had created their soul so as to have a twofold life: the one natural, the other supernatural. The natural life of their souls could not be lost; but the supernatural life of their souls, which was the life of grace, was lost the very instant they sinned. In that very moment God left their souls; and being deprived of this life, they were spiritually dead, and objects of horror to God and his holy angels. A total estrangement took place between God and them. They were afraid to look at him, and God looked upon them as undutiful children, as rebels who had forgotten all his favors, despised his commands, and trampled under foot the orders which he had given them.

2. When they lost the grace of God, they also lost all other supernatural gifts: they lost the gifts of wisdom and knowledge; they lost that wonderful dominion which their reason had exercised over their appetites; they lost their dominion over the animals; they were deprived of that particular assistance or light which God, before their sin, had granted to their understanding—to know and do what was according to God's holy will. Most shameful and degrading passions were enkindled in them, which contributed considerably towards weakening the light of the understanding to know, and the power of the will to do, what is good before God. They hid themselves in the garden from the face of the Lord. What blindness on their part to think they could render themselves invisible to the eyes of God! Instead of acknowledging their guilt, they excuse themselves,—Adam making Eve responsible for his fault, and Eve laying the blame on the serpent.

What blindness again for them to imagine they could deceive God!

After the fall, the mind of man underwent, indeed, a sad change. The light of reason became obscured, his knowledge of God became every day more faint, and the blindness of the intellect became such, that man at last forgot the God who had created him, and began to pay divine honor to the vilest creatures. He forgot his grand destiny, and, like the beasts around him, he placed his happiness in the gratification of his senses.

3. Weakness of the will is another consequence of sin. After the fall, the will of man became rebellious; evil passions strove to tyrannize over it, and to usurp the empire of the soul. In the state of innocence, the will found no obstacle in the exercise of virtue; but in consequence of sin, the will became weakened, its former strength was gone, and opposed but too often the will of God.

Before our first parents had sinned, they were naturally inclined to good: they knew nothing of indifference in the service of God, nothing of anger, hatred, cursing, impurity, vain ambition, and the like. But no sooner had they sinned, than God permitted their inclination to good to be changed into an inclination to evil.

### **13. What was the punishment of the body?**

*Immediate banishment from paradise, hard labor, all kinds of diseases and death.*

No sooner had Adam and Eve transgressed the commandment of God than they experienced the punishment of the soul. After this, the punishment of the body followed. God, however, before inflicting this punishment upon our first parents, addressed the serpent, and cursed him as the prime

promoter of the sin : "Because thou hast done this thing, thou shalt be cursed amongst all the beasts and cattle of the earth ; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. Of the daughters of Eve, one shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." It may be asked here, "Why did God curse the serpent, who was innocent, and who understood nothing of the words that came from him to Eve?" The answer to this is : First, all creatures were made for the benefit of man, and God's blessing was to rest upon them and man, as long as man was obedient to his Creator ; but, should he become disobedient, the punishment for his disobedience should fall, not upon man alone, but also upon creation in some mysterious way. Hence St. Paul writes : "Every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain even till now." This curse, then, put on an innocent animal, should serve as a constant instruction for man ; in the same way as the curse which our Lord put, four thousand years later, on a fig-tree, for man's warning. This curse, however, put on the serpent, was particularly to effect the Tempter himself ; it was to show the change which at this time was brought on him, namely : that, from that time forward, he should have to lower himself to humiliating artifices in which he would have but miserable success. This, it would seem, is the meaning of the words, "eating dust." Satan is thus punished, by receiving the contrary to what he had aimed at. He desired to have men for his worshippers, and thus be a rival of the Most High. Instead of this, even his victims were to be his superiors ; and in the successes that he might gain over them, he himself was to be the greatest sufferer. Instead of having more power to satisfy his ambition, he was obliged to descend

to habits such as his pride and ambition should feel most painful.

There are those who suppose that a change of some kind took place in the nature of the serpent after the fall, thinking that Satan would not have used as his instrument a loathsome object. It may have been so; but it is hardly necessary to suppose such a change. No doubt, before the fall, the serpent had its proper place and rank, as a creature of God, among the animals: for all that God had created was *good*. We may reasonably suppose that creeping on its belly and eating earth was *natural* to it; and this, and its outward aspect, were then not loathsome to man. But, after the fall, those habits which were natural to it, were turned into a penalty, for man's instruction. If even the devil did not lose his natural gifts on account of his sin, why should the serpent, which was innocent, have undergone a change in his nature?

Now, to return to the punishment of the body. Almighty God first punishes Eve, because she sinned first. He inflicted upon her a triple penalty corresponding to her triple sin. Because she believed the serpent when he said, "You shall be as gods," she is told, "I will multiply thy sorrows and thy conceptions." Because from gluttony she ate the forbidden fruit, she is told, "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children;" and because she seduced her husband, she is told, "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee."

We have already remarked that woman, even in her state of innocence, was in subjection to man. But it was a willing subjection, free from trouble or annoyance,—the loving service of a helpmate for him. After the fall, that subjection became hard and painful, and often even



very repugnant, as the whole history of woman up to the coming of our blessed Redeemer abundantly proves.

Having punished Eve, Almighty God said to Adam: "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it produce; and in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken: for, dust thou art, and into dust shalt thou return."

Before Adam sinned, the tilling of the earth was not laborious or painful to him; it was rather attended with pleasure, joy, and satisfaction; to cultivate the soil was to him a delightful recreation. But, after his sin, it became a life-long penance. Before his sin, he knew neither pain, nor sorrow, nor labor, nor grief, nor toil; but, after his sin, he became subject to grief, weariness, and diseases of all kinds, even to death itself. Life is the last temporal blessing, and this blessing, too, was lost by sin. Death is the consequence of sin: "God has not made death," says Holy Scripture. Death could not come from the soul, for the soul was immortal. Nor could death come from the body; for, by a special privilege which God gave it at the moment of its formation, it was incorruptible and immortal: "God made man never to die," says Holy Writ. Sin, then, was the only cause of death. To punish sin, God deprived man of the great gift of immortality which he had given him, and subjected him to death. Hence St. Paul says: "By one man sin entered the world, and by sin, death." (Rom. v, 12.)

After having inflicted the temporal penalties upon our

first parents, Almighty God made for them clothes of the skins of beasts; and to make them even more sensible of their folly, he exclaimed, in a tone of irony: "Behold! Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil. Near the tree of life he shall never come, lest he should be for eating also of that fruit and live forever." God then drove them out of paradise. The delightful garden was no longer to be their dwelling-place. A cherubim, with a flaming sword, was placed at the entrance to prevent them from ever reëntering it.

#### **14. What is the sin of our first parents called?**

*It is called original sin, because it is the origin or beginning of all human miseries.*

Look around on all the evils that now afflict mankind. Call to mind all the evils that afflicted the world in past ages. Imagine all the evils that shall befall mankind until the end of the world. Unite together all the diseases and poverty, all the tears and sadness, all the passions and ignorance, all the quarrels and hatred, all the famine and pestilence, the wars and earthquakes; heap together in one vast mound all the bones that are now mouldering in the graves; collect together the scattered dust of all the dead that have mouldered in ages long past,—and then let us remember that all this misery, all this ruin, flow from the sin of our first parents as their first origin or source.

#### **15. Why is original sin the beginning of all human miseries?**

*Because, from our first parents it passed, with its punishments, to all their descendants.*

Man, as God made him, had three perfections. First, he was perfect in body and soul. Secondly, he had the

higher perfection of the Holy Spirit dwelling in his heart, whereby his soul was ordered and sanctified, and the passions were held in perfect subjection to the reason and the will. Thirdly, he had a perfection arising from that higher perfection, namely: immortality in the body, and perfect integrity in the soul. So that he had these three perfections: a natural perfection in body and soul, a supernatural perfection by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and a preternatural perfection of immortality: and all these were forfeited by one act of disobedience! When he sinned the spirit of God departed from him, his soul died, *i. e.*, lost its true life, because it was separated from God; his immortality was forfeited, the integrity or harmony of the soul was lost likewise, the passions rebelled, the will was weakened, the intellect became confused, and the nature of man was deprived of its supernatural perfection, and of all that follows it. This is the meaning of the words, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die the death." It was spiritual and temporal death, which was to be followed by eternal death hereafter.

Now, the transgression of the law by our head is also our real sin with its consequences, because mankind springs from that one head: that one head was the heir to all the benedictions of the kingdom of God in our behalf: our inheritance was contained in him. Had he stood firm, we should have inherited the kingdom of God: he fell, and by his fall disinherited the race of mankind.

This, then, is the meaning of original sin in us: it is, that we, being-born of that forefather, are born disinherited of these three perfections which we lost in him by disobedience. We are born into this world without the spirit of God; we receive it in our baptism, which is our second

birth. By our first birth, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." We have the three "wounds," as they are called, of Adam: ignorance in the intellect, weakness in the will, and turbulence in the passions. This is the state in which we are born into this world, and therefore we are spiritually dead before God.

This truth is clearly expressed in many parts of Scripture. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, says: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death: and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned." (Rom. v, 12.) It has, too, been defined a point of Catholic belief by the Council of Trent, in these words: "If any one asserts that the prevarication of Adam injured himself alone, and not his posterity, and that the holiness and justice received of God, which he lost, he lost for himself alone, and not for us also; or that he, being defiled by the sin of disobedience, has only transfused death and pains of the body into the whole human race, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul,—let him be anathema: whereas he contradicts the apostle, who says, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.'" (Sess. v.)

Again, there can be nothing clearer on this subject than the words of Jesus Christ in his Gospel: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." But what necessity for a second birth, except the first be impure, and render us all guilty? All men, then, sinned in Adam, not as the physical head of the human race,—otherwise we should be guilty of all his sins,—but as the moral head, which represented all his children, with reference to the observance



of that precept, in regard to which, God, on account of his supreme dominion over all his creatures, included the wills of all men in the will of Adam.

The Church has always strongly defended this principal article of our faith against all who have impugned it. We all have, then, sinned in Adam ; his disobedience has been our disobedience, his fault has been our fault, and the punishment due to his transgression we have been made *partakers* of.

Every one of us has, from his childhood, experienced all this:—how weak is our knowledge of God ; how weak is the knowledge of our duties towards him ; how many instructions are required to communicate that knowledge to our souls, and to keep us mindful of the observance of our duties ; how weak and how slow is the will to comply with these duties ; how strong is not our inclination to evil.

We naturally feel more inclined to anger than to meekness ; more inclined to disobedience than to submission. We are more prone to hatred than to love ; more inclined to gratify the evil desires of our heart than to practise the holy virtue of purity. We prefer our own ease to visiting Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament, or receiving him in holy communion. We are naturally indifferent towards God and his holy religion ; we lack fervor in his divine service ; we often feel more inclined to join a forbidden society than to enter a pious confraternity ; we often find more pleasure in reading a bad or useless book than one that is good and edifying ; we are more apt to listen to uncharitable and unbecoming conversation than to the Word of God ; we feel naturally more inclined to vainglory, pride, and levity, than to humility, self-contempt, and the spirit of mortification.

The great Apostle St. Paul bears witness to this inclination to evil, when he says : " I do not that good which I will," he says ; " but the evil which I hate, that I do." (Rom. vii, 15.) He means to say : I do not wish to do evil, I even try to avoid it ; but I experience within myself a continual inclination to evil ; I endeavor to do good, but I feel within myself a great reluctance thereto, and I must do violence to myself in order to act aright. So that, as the Catholic Church teaches, the supernatural likeness of God was altogether lost by sin, and the natural likeness of God considerably disfigured.

**16. Are, then, all men conceived and born in original sin ?**

*Yes ; all mankind are conceived and born in original sin, except the Blessed Virgin Mary : she was preserved from it, because she was to be the Mother of God.*

We have seen that all men, as children of a rebellious father, are born in original sin,—born children of wrath and enemies of God. " When a vassal," says St. Alphonsus, " rebels against his sovereign, all the descendants of the rebel become hateful to the prince, and are banished from the kingdom. So, in like manner, all mankind is deprived of the advantages of original justice, on account of the rebellion of our first parents : and justly so ; for God owed them nothing. But how this deprivation, how this transmission of original sin takes place, we cannot tell, for it is a mystery, which we must believe, because God has revealed it. He has told us that Adam's sin is transmitted to us. We have no more questions to ask about it."

But, in this universal corruption of all mankind, Almighty God chose one, and only one, of the human race, and

preserved that one privileged person untainted. That happy one is the Blessed Virgin Mary. God let the stream of sin flow by, without touching her in the least. The will of all men, it is true, was included in that of Adam, as being the head of all, and therefore fell in him; but God did not include the will of Mary in that of Adam: he preserved her from being conceived in sin. Hence it is an article of faith defined by Pope Pius IX, Dec. 8, 1854, "that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, preserved, in the first moment of her conception, free from all stain of original sin."

"Wherefore, if any persons—which God forbid!—shall presume to think in their hearts otherwise than we have now defined, let them know that they are condemned by their own judgment, that they have suffered shipwreck in faith, and have fallen away from the unity of the Church."

**17. What do we call the privilege of Mary conceived without sin?**

*We call it the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

The unspeakable grace or privilege of Mary in *being* conceived without sin is called the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This singular grace and privilege was bestowed upon her on account of the merits of Jesus Christ. These merits were applied to her in a far nobler and more honorable manner than to the rest of mankind. A medicine which prevents sickness is certainly much better than one which cures it. The merits of Jesus Christ were for the Blessed Virgin a medicine, as it were, to prevent and preserve her from being infected by the universal sickness of mankind, original sin, whilst they

cure us of this sickness when applied to our souls in baptism. The Blessed Virgin Mary, therefore, owes as much to the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary as we do, and far more. But he was her Saviour in a more glorious manner than ours. Almighty God may save man in any way he likes. He is not bound to save this soul or that, in this or that particular way. In us the blood of Christ is a cleansing grace; in Mary it was a preventing grace: God preserved her from ever being defiled by sin, because he had chosen her to be the Mother of his Son, whom he wished to be born of a virgin who was sinless, pure and most holy, from the first moment of her existence.

**18. What would have become of men, had not God shown mercy to them?**

*They would have been cast into the everlasting torments of hell.*

God is the supreme Lord of heaven and earth. As such, he requires man to pay him the divine honor of adoration; that is, to acknowledge his supreme dominion over all creatures, by doing all he commands. Our first parents refused to give him this honor when they ate of the forbidden fruit. As enemies of God, they could no longer please him by anything, having incurred temporal and everlasting punishment. In consequence of their sin, the unhappy race of mankind groaned in misery upon this earth; all were children of wrath, nor was there one who could appease a God righteously indignant at their sins. Nothing but the everlasting torments of hell could have been expected, had not God shown mercy to mankind.



**19. How did God show mercy to mankind?**

*God promised them a Redeemer, for whose sake he pardoned them, and gave the grace of leading holy lives to those who prayed for it.*

When Almighty God cursed the serpent, or rather the devil who had taken the form of a serpent, he said: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." (Gen. iii, 15.) In other words: Thou, Satan, hast desired to put enmity between me and man, whom I created in holiness and justice; thou hast desired to have him and all his descendants for thy worshippers. Thou hast succeeded in bringing about this enmity between me and man, by inducing him to believe you rather than me. Thou hast obtained a great victory, for Adam and all his descendants are under thy power. But thy victory is not complete. I will raise up fallen man; and, in order to raise him up, I have conceived a design more admirable than that of creation itself,—a design which will make my wisdom shine forth with a new glory, to the astonishment of my angels. By the execution of this plan, I will procure for myself adoration, homages, honors, as great as myself. My infinite justice and infinite mercy will be reconciled. My justice shall receive the immeasurable satisfaction which is due to it; sin also shall receive all the punishment which it deserves. But my mercy will forever beam forth in my plan more brightly even than my justice. My plan is this: A woman is to be born who will never, for one moment, be under thy power. "I will put enmities between thee and that woman." She will always be opposed to thee: "She will crush thy head;" that is, she will destroy the power which thou hast

gained over mankind by sin; she will crush it by means of him whom she will bring forth. In her Son, man and the whole universe will find not only pardon, but all the perfection, all the greatness, all the blessedness, of which they are capable. Hence, "I will put enmities not only between thee and that woman, but I will also put enmities between thy seed and her seed;" that is, I will put enmities between thy followers and her Son's followers: for there will be, henceforth, such men as will not profit by my copious Redemption, and they, of their own free will and choice, shall remain in thy power. But there will be many who will avail themselves of the blessings of Redemption; they will follow me, and overcome all thy insidious attacks. Sin is thy work of disorder, folly, injustice, darkness, death; but my work of Redemption is a work of heavenly harmony, unspeakable wisdom, justice, light and resurrection. By sin thou hast brought mankind down lower than the brutes; but by my work of Redemption man shall be raised up even to my divinity.

As Eve has been the willing instrument in thy hands to gain power over mankind, and bring death into the world, so, in like manner, the woman who is to be born after some time, will be the willing instrument in my hands to restore life to *mankind*. "Thou shalt lie in wait for her heel:" that is, thou shalt henceforth make insidious attempts to nullify the effects of this promise of mine; but in vain.

It is thus that God promised a Redeemer to mankind, who would repair the injury which had been offered him by sin, obtain forgiveness and all the necessary graces for every one to lead a holy life, provided he would ask for these graces.

**20. To whom did God first promise a Redeemer ?**

*To Adam and Eve after their fall ; and afterwards he renewed this promise to the patriarchs and prophets.*

For the sake of the promised Redeemer, Almighty God, in his infinite mercy, granted to our first parents the grace to be truly sorry for their sin. They asked his pardon, and were ready even to die, to cancel their sin and its consequences. But God gave them to understand that the offence was too great to be cancelled by penances, by the sacrifice of their lives, or even by the torments of hell. To console them, he explained to them how the words addressed to the serpent contained the promise of a new Eve and a new Adam, who would repair their fault. He told them that, for the sake of this new Adam, he forgave them, received them again into his friendship, and would, were they to ask for it, give them grace to lead a penitential life, be saved, and rewarded in heaven. Consoled by this promise, our first parents firmly resolved always to honor and worship God as the Supreme Lord of the universe, by living up to his will for the remainder of their life. But God knew that they were strongly inclined to evil, and very apt to break their promise. To strengthen them in their good resolution, he gave them a positive command to offer him sacrifice ; that is, such outward acts of divine worship as should fittingly express the sentiments of their hearts. So he instructed them to offer him, instead of their lives, the lives of animals, or to destroy other sensible objects ; in order to acknowledge, by such bloody or unbloody sacrifices, that he was the Supreme Lord of the universe—that, were he to require it, they should be willing to sacrifice even their lives in honor of his divine Majesty. He gave them, moreover, to understand that these sacrifices

were to remind them of the promised Redeemer, and would be pleasing to him, if offered in the manner and with the intention prescribed.

Adam and Eve believed in the Redeemer to come; they promised true amendment of life, and faithfulness in the observance of all that God had commanded them; they were received again into the friendship of God, and persevered in it to the end of their lives. Adam did penance for his sin during nine hundred and thirty years. "It is an article of faith," says St. Alphonsus in his work, "Providence of God" (c. i, 24), "defined by the Church against Tatian, that Adam did penance for his sin and is saved. St. Irenæus (l. v, contr. Hæres., c. 54), St. Augustine (Epist. 164), Tertullian, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and many others, have defended this truth. This truth is clearly expressed in Holy Scripture, which says of Adam, 'She (Wisdom x, 2) preserved him, and she brought him out of his sin.'"

"It is also," says St. Alphonsus, "firmly believed that Eve was saved through her faith in the Redeemer to come." And in his work, "The Glories of Mary," the same author says, in his discourse on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, that, when she entered heaven, all the saints came to salute her, and that amongst them came our first parents, Adam and Eve, to thank her with the greatest affection.

"The Greeks," says the Rev. P. Power in his catechism, "have placed Adam and Eve among the just of the Old Law, and honor their memories on the nineteenth of December. They even commemorate, on the fourth of February, by a religious mourning, their expulsion from the garden of paradise. Some Latin martyrologies make mention of Adam and Eve on the twenty-fourth of December."



When Eve died, we cannot exactly say ; but Adam died when he was nine hundred and thirty years old, and was buried on Calvary, where, in course of time, a chapel was erected to his memory. "The place where the cross of Jesus Christ was erected," says St. Ambrose, "was the spot where Adam had been buried, as the Jews tell us ; and, indeed, it was meet that the source of our life should be placed in the very spot where had lain the origin of our death."\* In a sermon on the passion and death of our Lord, St. Athanasius speaks thus : "The place selected by Jesus Christ, on which he was to suffer and die, was Calvary, which, according to the opinion of the most learned among the Jews, contained the bones of Adam ; for they tell us that, after his expulsion and condemnation, he died and was buried there. But, if this be so, the connection of such a place with the cross of Jesus Christ is truly admirable ; for it was quite in keeping that our Lord, coming to seek out and bring back the children of Adam, should select, as the scene of his sufferings and death, the very place in which he had been interred." In St. Basil's time it was the prevailing belief among Christians that Adam was buried in Calvary ; and St. Epiphanius tells us that he had read many works in which that belief was attested.

Almighty God often repeated to the patriarchs and prophets, and through them to their fellow-men, the promise of the Redeemer, which he had made first to Adam and Eve. All those who believed and hoped in the Redeemer to come, and kept the commandments of God, were saved, as we are saved by our belief and hope in a Redeemer who has already come, and by doing what he has commanded us.

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\* The Benedictine edition of the works of St. Ambrose, p. 1525.

**21. Why did all mankind need a Redeemer !**

*Because, all being sinners, they were unable to render due satisfaction to God for sin ; and to obtain the graces necessary for salvation.*

Man being finite, and nothing but a miserable sinner and an enemy of God, was unable, by any punishment whatever, to atone for the injury offered to an infinite majesty : there was need of another God to satisfy the divine justice.

To restore to God our humanity which sin had withdrawn from him, it was necessary that there should be a man, pure, innocent, spotless, so that he had no satisfaction to make for himself ; it was necessary that he should enjoy, from the first moment of his existence, the vision and possession of God, so that he had not to merit eternal blessedness on his own account, at the cost of his sufferings and his death. It was also necessary that he should be man-God ; for, in order to repurchase for us God, whom we had lost, it was necessary that the price should be equal to God. It was therefore necessary that he be God. In order to repair the infinite injury done to God by sin, it was necessary for him to offer to God an expiation equal to God himself—an infinite satisfaction. It was therefore necessary that he be God ; and, since he had to offer our humanity in sacrifice, it was necessary that he be Lord and Master of it, and, consequently, that he be God. But such a man-God did not exist, and our redemption seemed to be impossible.

But God, in his infinite wisdom, found a way to save mankind : he decreed that his only-begotten Son was to be our Redeemer, for whose coming the just of the Old Law sighed. This was he whom Abraham desired, and the patriarchs and prophets longed to look upon : “ Rain down,

O heavens! and send us the Just One to appease the wrath of that God whom we ourselves cannot appease, because we are all sinners. Hasten and show us, O God of mercies! that greatest mercy which thou hast already promised us, namely, our Saviour." Such were the longing aspirations and exclamations of the saints.

## 22. When did the Redeemer come?

*He came about four thousand years after the fall of our first parents.*

Heaven and earth had worked together in preparing for the coming of the Redeemer. On the part of heaven, a solemn promise was made immediately after the fall. This promise is renewed to Abraham, to Isaac, to Moses. In order to hand down this promise and represent its fulfilment, a priesthood and a sacrifice are instituted by the Most High. One family is saved from the universal wreck. The God of mankind makes a covenant with the Jewish people, destined to be the parent of the Messiah or Redeemer. A law is given to them, inspired books are written for them; figurative sacrifices and a ritual are prescribed, every part of which foreshadows the Redemption. Lastly, throughout the whole world, God disposes the course of events and the revolutions of empires, with a view to the accomplishment of his designs. The Jews are dispersed far and wide. They had their books translated into what was then the universal language. The Roman empire is extended beyond expectation, and everywhere peace reigns. The Roman roads have been constructed for the apostles and their successors.

On the part of mankind, we hear, on the one hand, the prayers and sighs of patriarchs and prophets, calling for

the *Desired of all nations*, entreating the clouds to rain down the Just. On the other hand, in the heathen world, we behold idolatry, with all its miseries, calling for the Redeemer more loudly than even the prayers of the saints. In all times and in all places, among the Jews as well as the Gentiles, we see a universal expectation and hope. "He will come from the East," said the Greeks and the Romans: "From the West," said the Indians and Chinese: "He will bring back the golden age and a new order of things," was the song of Virgil: "He will give the chief authority in the world to persons sent forth from Judea," wrote Tacitus: "In order to be able to remedy all our ills, it is necessary that he be God," was the opinion of Plato. Meanwhile, the world arrived at the highest point of glory and the last degree of degradation. Then it was that he who had conversed with Adam, and with Abraham so desirous "to see his day appear" (John viii, 56); who had spoken so familiarly with Moses, and proclaimed his commandments and ceremonies in the midst of Israel,—he, "the Word made flesh," Emmanuel, the Redeemer, appeared. This happy time, which came only after the lapse of four thousand years, is called in Holy Scripture the "*fulness of time*," on account of the fulness of grace which the Son of God came to communicate to men by the redemption of the world.



## THE SECOND ARTICLE.

### **1. Which is the second article of the Creed?**

*“And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.”*

In the first article of the Creed, we have seen how God the Father, for the love of us, has created the boundless universe, with all its millions of stars and countless worlds. Out of love, he has given us a being far superior to all that we can see in nature. He has given us a body to be the living temple of the Holy Ghost; he has given us a soul that can never die; he has made us like himself, free, intelligent, immortal; he has given us his angels to be our guides; he has prepared for us heaven, there to reign with him as kings in never-ending happiness, in the brightness of eternal glory. He has promised even to give himself to us as our exceeding great reward. He has given us eyes to gaze on the beautiful works of his creation, and afterwards to see him face to face in heaven; he has given us ears to listen with pleasure to his word, and hereafter to drink in with joy the sweet harmonies of the blessed; he has given us a tongue to pray to him, praise him, and bless him; he has given us hands to lift them up in prayer, and to help the poor; he has given us feet to bear us to his holy temple; he has given us a heart to love him in this life and in the next; and when we were lost through Adam's sin, he decreed to send his Son to be our Redeemer, and to restore us to his friendship and to our lost inheritance of eternal bliss and happiness. Truly, “God is love,”

as St. John the Evangelist writes ; every work which God the Father has done for us sings to us a wondrous song, and the sweet burden of its song is : " God the Father is love, all love for us ; he is truly called Father."

The love of God for man was unspeakably great, as it had been from all eternity. But, heretofore, the real greatness of this divine love had not appeared. It was only when God the Son became man and our Redeemer, and was named Jesus Christ, that the love of God truly appeared.

## 2. Who is Jesus Christ ?

*Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world.*

From the beginning of the world, men had seen the power of God in the creation, and his wisdom in the government of the world ; but only when God the Father sent his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, was it seen how great was his love for us. Before God was made man upon earth, men could not form an idea of the divine goodness ; therefore did he take mortal flesh, that, appearing as man, he might make plain to men the greatness of his benignity.

Alexander the Great, after he had conquered Darius and subdued Persia, wished to gain the affections of that people, and accordingly went about, dressed in the Persian costume. Our Lord appears to have acted in like manner. In order to gain the affections of men, he clothed himself completely after the human fashion, and was made man. By this means he wished to make known the depth of the love which he bore to man. Man does not love me, God seemed to say, because he does not see me ; I wish to make myself seen by him, and to converse with him, and so make myself loved. Now, when we speak of the second

person of the Blessed Trinity simply as God, we generally call him God the Son. But when we speak of him as God made man for us,—that is, as both God and man,—we call him Jesus Christ. That he is the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world, has been amply shown in the first volume of this work. (See Part II, q. 2, p. 47.)

The Son of God has been known to us only since he made himself the son of man, and, consequently, our brother. Yes, Jesus Christ, who is God, is our brother! He does not shrink from calling us his brethren. “Go,” says he, “tell my brethren that I ascend to my Father, who is also their father.” (John xx, 17.) God my brother! What a mystery of love is this! “God so loved the world that he gave up for us his only Son.” (John iii, 16.) “Yes, to redeem the slave,” the Church exclaims, “thou hast delivered up thy Son.”

### 3. What is the meaning of the word Jesus ?

*Jesus means Saviour, or Redeemer.*

The name “Jesus” is, of all others, the most holy and sacred, because it is the name which was borne by the Son of God when he lived on earth. This holy name was given to our dear Lord, not by man, but by God himself; for, when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to St. Joseph to tell him not to fear to take our Blessed Lady for his spouse, for that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost, he added: “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matt. i, 21.) In the Hebrew language the word “Jesus” means Saviour or Redeemer. This name was well suited to him who was to be the Redeemer of the whole world. To redeem means to repurchase. In speaking, for instance,

of slaves or prisoners of war, we say, it is great charity to send money to redeem them, that is, to buy back their liberty. Now, all men were slaves and prisoners of the devil by sin; and St. Peter tells us that Jesus Christ has redeemed us, not with gold or silver, or corruptible things, but with his own most precious blood (1 Pet. i, 18), because he paid this price for the purchase of our liberty.

The name of Jesus was given to our dear Saviour when he was circumcised, that is, on the eighth day after his birth. Circumcision was a ceremony prescribed by God to Abraham as a sign of the covenant which had been entered into between himself and Abraham, and which was to be the distinctive mark of all the descendants of Abraham. In compliance with the order of God, every male child was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God, was not bound to comply with this law; he had no necessity of bearing on his sacred flesh the sign of the covenant with his Father, for he was in him: he and the Father were one. A law, by which, according to St. Augustine and many other holy fathers, the stain of original sin was removed before the institution of baptism, could not bind him who had no sin. He was never *conceived in iniquity*—he was exempt from all sin, and so was dispensed from the law of circumcision. But as he came on earth, not to destroy the law, but to perfect it, he, like all the other Hebrew children, subjected himself to this law, wishing thereby to teach us to bow down with submission and docility to the commands of God, and not, under vain pretexts, to consider ourselves exempt from their performance.

The Son of God, then, having been circumcised, was named Jesus. This name of Jesus is an eternal name;



for, as our salvation was decreed from eternity, so also, from all eternity, was this name given to the Redeemer. This name, however, as has just been said, was given to our Redeemer, only on the day of his circumcision: "And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus."

The name of Jesus is a sublime name; for, as has already been said, it was not given by man, but by God himself: "And thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel of the Lord to St. Joseph. And St. Paul says of this name: "God has given him a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth:" by which words the angels, men, and the devils are commanded to adore this holy name.

The name of Jesus is a consoling name. It is consoling for the poor; for it reminds them of the poverty of Jesus Christ, the remembrance of which cannot fail to create, in their hearts, love for their state of poverty. This name is also consoling for the sick; for it recalls to their minds the sufferings and pains which Jesus Christ underwent for them: and the remembrance of his sufferings will certainly afford them, in their pains, strength, courage, and consolation. The name of Jesus is also consoling for those who are persecuted; for it reminds them of the persecutions which Jesus Christ suffered, especially during the three last years of his life. The holy apostles rejoiced when they were ill-treated and reviled. Whence came their joy? From the remembrance of the name of Jesus. "They went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus." (Acts v, 41.) The name of Jesus is also consoling

for sinners; for it reminds them of the great love with which he came down from heaven to save them. The remembrance of this love cannot fail to inspire them with confidence and a firm hope to receive the pardon of their sins, if they truly amend their lives.

The name of Jesus is a *powerful* name. It is powerful in heaven, because it can obtain all graces for us: "If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you." (John xvi, 23.) The name of Jesus is also powerful on earth, because it can save all who invoke it with confidence and devotion. No sooner had the blind man in the Gospel said, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me" (Luke xviii, 39), than Jesus said, "Receive thy sight." This name is powerful in hell, for it makes all the devils tremble. Those rebellious angels tremble at the very sound of that sacred name; for, when they hear that name, they remember that Jesus Christ is the Mighty One who destroyed the power which they had gained over mankind before his coming: "They tremble at the sound of that name," says St. Peter Chrysologus, "because, when they hear it, they have to adore the great majesty of God." Our Saviour himself said that, through this powerful name, his disciples should cast out devils: "In my name they shall cast out devils." (Mark xvi, 17.) Hence it is that the holy Catholic Church, in her exorcisms, always makes frequent use of this name, in order to expel the infernal spirits from those who are possessed. The name of Jesus inflames with divine love all those who pronounce it with devotion. The name of Jesus is a name which calls to our mind all that our Saviour has done and suffered for our salvation. "O my Jesus!" exclaims a pious author with all the affection of his heart,—

“O my Jesus! how much has it cost thee to be Jesus, that is, my Saviour! O yes! it is impossible for a soul that is faithful in pronouncing the name of Jesus, and in remembering all he has done for our salvation, to remain indifferent and without love for him who has done so much for us.” “When I utter the name of Jesus,” says St. Bernard, “I behold before me one who is meek, humble, kind, and merciful; one who at the same time is almighty, and heals and strengthens me.” “Let us, then,” says St. Anselm, “let us cherish this sweet, this consoling, this powerful name of Jesus; let us have it always in our hearts and on our lips; let it be our only food, our only consolation, our only delight.”

But the name of Jesus is to many an almost unknown name, because they do not love Jesus. The saints always have this name of salvation and love in their hearts and on their lips. In the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul the name of Jesus is found two hundred and nineteen times. If this great apostle wrote this saving name so many times in a few epistles, how many times must he have uttered it when alone, on his journeys, in dangers, in affliction, in persecutions, in private and public instructions, in his prayers and aspirations! No doubt, he uttered it millions of times, for it was his food, his love, his strength, his consolation, his all. When he was beheaded in Rome, and his head was already severed from the body, he was heard to utter still the sweet name of Jesus three times in succession. Blessed Henry Suso, St. Jane Chantal, and many other saints, engraved the name of Jesus on their breast, in order to increase their love for it. Our divine Saviour does not expect that much from us. He is satisfied if we often remember him in our hearts, and invoke

him with devotion. As his whole life was spent for us, let us spend ours for him. "All whatsoever you do, in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Col. iii, 17.) If we are afflicted, let us call on Jesus, and he will console us; if we are tempted, let us invoke Jesus, and he will strengthen us to banish the temptation; if we are cold in divine love, let us often invoke Jesus, and he will inflame our hearts with love for him. How happy shall we be if, while dying, we pronounce the name of Jesus! But if we desire to breathe our last with this saving name on our lips, we must accustom ourself to repeat it often every day of our life; and each time we pronounce the name of Jesus, let us add the name of Mary, which is also a name from heaven and a powerful name,—a name that reminds us of the Queen of heaven, of the Mother of God, who is also our mother, the mother of mercy, the mother of love.

Let us rest assured that an earthly enemy is not so terrified at a great army, as are the powers of hell at the names and protection of Jesus and Mary. At the sound of those great names the devil flees, and hell trembles; for those names are like a tower of strength. By taking refuge therein, not only sinners are shielded from punishment, and come forth securely defended and saved, but the just also are preserved from the assaults of hell. The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Bridget that, even from the most abandoned sinners, who had wandered the farthest from God, and were most fully possessed by the devil, the enemy departs as soon as he hears her most powerful name invoked by them, if invoked with the intention of true amendment; but she added that, if the soul does not amend and with contrition quit its sin, the demons immediately



return to it and hold it in their possession. (Rev., lib. i, c. 9.) And as the rebel angels depart from sinners who invoke the names of Jesus and Mary, so, on the other hand, as our Lady told St. Bridget, the good angels draw more closely around those just souls who devoutly pronounce them.

#### 4. What does the name Christ mean?

*Christ means the Anointed.*

The word Christ means *Anointed*,—a title which the Jews applied to the Redeemer when our blessed Lord lived among them. When St. John the Baptist had become famous by his preaching penance, the Pharisees sent to ask him whether he was the *Christ*. (John i, 19.) They also put the same question to our Lord. “How long,” said they, “dost thou hold our souls in suspense? If thou be the *Christ*, tell us plainly.” (John x, 24.)

#### 5. Why is Jesus called the Anointed?

*Because, in the Old Law, the prophets, the high-priests, and kings, were anointed with oil, and Jesus is our greatest prophet, priest, and king.*

Jesus is called the Anointed, on account of his threefold character as prophet, high-priest, and king. In the Old Law, each one of the prophets, high-priests and kings was solemnly anointed with oil, to signify the graces which he required for the discharge of his important office. Now, our dear Saviour fulfilled these three offices. He is, then, justly called, above all others, the Christ, or the Anointed. He was our great high-priest on Mount Calvary, where he offered his life in sacrifice for our sins; and he continues to be our high-priest at Mass, on the altar, where he

offers his body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, to apply to our souls the merits of his bloody sacrifice of the cross. He is also the great prophet who fulfilled the prophecies of all who had gone before, and foretold many things partly already fulfilled, and partly still to be fulfilled at the end of the world. Finally, he is a king; for he is the Lord of heaven and earth, who came to establish in our hearts the kingdom of his grace, and to lead us hereafter to the eternal kingdom of heaven. However, we must not imagine that our dear Lord was anointed with oil in the manner in which man is anointed, to fulfil these sublime offices. His anointing was the presence of his Godhead, closely and inseparably united with his human nature. It was by his divinity that his sacred body and soul were consecrated and chosen for the important office of redeeming mankind.

#### **6. Why is Christ the only Son of God ?**

*Because, from all eternity, Jesus Christ is, by nature, the only Son of God, and we are the children of God only by adoption.*

We have already seen, when speaking of God's goodness and of the three divine persons, that God the Father generates, from all eternity, one only Son, the second person of the blessed Trinity. But this heavenly Father still continues to beget, in time, children who are by grace what God the Son is by nature; so that our sonship bears the greatest resemblance to the divine Sonship.

Divine and human laws recognize and admit two kinds of paternity: the paternity of nature, and the paternity of adoption. The paternity of nature has its principle in the natural fecundity of our being; the paternity of adoption,

in the fecundity of love. For, says St. Augustine, "charity is also fecund, charity is also a mother." When nature can no longer give children, charity creates them, by adoption; she bears them, so to speak, in her *bowels*, nourishes them and feeds them in her bosom, and the love that adopts them takes the place of the default of nature. These two kinds of paternity come from God as their principle, for, says St. Paul, "in heaven and on earth, all paternity is from God." (Eph. iii, 15).

By his nature, God the Father generates from all eternity his only Son, who is equal to him in all things; by adoption, he is the Father of all men, whom he created by his love. God has no need, like the fathers of this world, to seek a paternity of adoption, in order to supply the want of a paternity of nature. He is, from all eternity, the Father of a Son who is equal to himself, the splendor of his glory, and the image of his substance. He seeks the paternity of adoption, only to diffuse the riches of his love. The divine nature is fecund, as God has, by nature, a Son consubstantial with himself. But divine love is fecund also, and therefore God has adopted children. On this account, St. John says, we are indebted to the immense love of God that we are not only called, but are in reality, his children. Our title of adoption is, in relation to God, not an idea purely ascetical, or exaggerated, or a vain name, without effect. It is a true and real fact, which God has announced, in Holy Scripture, in the most clear, precise, and energetic terms. "Listen," said he, through the Prophet Jeremias, "to the words of the Almighty. There will come a day, when I myself will truly be your Father, and you will truly be my children." When this joyful mystery of love was accomplished, he said through his apostle, St.

Paul, that our adoption as children of God had been decreed from all eternity. To accomplish it entirely, and give us the solemn investiture, he sent his only Son on earth. No one is excluded or excepted; all are adopted who follow our Lord Jesus Christ. This adoption does not consist in words and promises; but it gives us the most authentic title and real rights of the children and heirs of God, and coheirs of Jesus Christ. To convince us more deeply of the truth of our adoption, the Holy Ghost bears witness to it, and reminds us of it, without ceasing. He infuses this sentiment into our soul, by a communication of the spirit of God the Son, in order that we in truth may invoke God as our Father, animated with the confidence and love with which Jesus Christ calls him Father. There can be no doubt that we, through and with Jesus Christ, are the children of God: what Jesus Christ is by nature, we are by adoption. We shall speak more at large on this subject, when we explain the effects of baptism.

### **7. Why is Jesus Christ called our Lord?**

1, *Because he is our God*; 2, *because he bought us at the great price of his blood.*

A man may be master of a thing and claim to make every use of it, either because he has made it, or because he has acquired it by purchase. In this manner, he who builds a house, fashions a statue, or paints a picture, is the master of his own work; and so, too, a person who buys a thing is the master of his purchase. Now, it is precisely on these two titles that Jesus Christ is called our Lord. As God, he made us, and, as God-man, he bought us at the price of his own blood.

The sculptor is the owner of the statue which he has



carved with his chisel; the potter is the proprietor of the vessel which his hands have shaped; and the painter is the master of the picture which he has drawn with his pencil on the canvas. Now, as they are masters of their own handiwork, they can put it to any use, since it is their right to dispose of it in any way they please. But what comparison is there between this dominion of theirs, and the sovereign and absolute dominion of Jesus Christ as God over us? For, after all, the sculptor did not make his statue out of nothing, but out of a block of marble, which was not the work of his hands. The painter obtained his colors elsewhere, and blended them together on canvas made ready to his hands. The potter did not fashion his vessel out of nothing, but out of clay, which was dug out of the ground. But Christ, as God, in giving us our being, did not draw us out of cold stone, nor out of lifeless canvas, nor out of soft clay, but out of nothing, without employing any material which could share with him in the production of our noble substance. The artists, just mentioned, made use of a most limited power, in order to give shape to their several productions. But Christ, as God, set in motion a boundless power, in order to give us our being; for it needed no less to draw us out of the bottomless depths of our own nothingness. How great, then, is the dominion due to Christ as God over us all! How great a wrong is offered to Christ by him who refuses subordination to him!

But, further: Christ's sovereign lordship over us is not derived merely from his being our Maker, but also from his having redeemed us. Hence he is our Lord, not only as our Maker, but also as our Redeemer. Every one knows the state of everlasting perdition into which we fell

by the sin of our first parents : God, in his infinite mercy, resolved to rescue us from that state of perdition. In order to deliver us from the power of our enemies, he did not pay down sums of gold or silver, nor did he part with a priceless store of gems and diamonds ; but he drew forth from his veins his own life-blood to the last drop,—a ransom so priceless, that with it no treasure can be compared. God himself cannot find, in the stores of his inconceivable power, anything so precious as one little drop of his own blood : all possible treasures cannot equal its value. But if a single drop of the divine blood is of inestimable price, what shall we say of that great stream of blood shed by Christ to redeem us ? What, then, is not the right of Christ to be our Lord, since he ransomed us at an infinite price ! It should, then, never occur to our minds to set our evil will in opposition to Christ's most adorable will, since he is our Lord, both as God and as Redeemer.

## THE THIRD ARTICLE.

### 1. Which is the third article of the Creed?

*“Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.”*

### 2. What do we mean when we say that the Son of God became man for us?

*We mean that the Son of God took to himself a body and a soul like ours.*

The holy patriarchs and prophets, and thousands of the just, for ages and ages, had sighed and prayed and yearned for the coming of the one who would “crush the serpent’s head” and redeem the world. When at last the happy time for the fulfilment of the promise of the Redeemer had arrived, God the Father sent his only Son to take to himself, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, a body and a soul like ours, in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary. “The Word (the Son of God) was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.” (John i, 14.) It was not enough for God’s love to create us to his own image; God also himself must be made to our image in redeeming us. Adam partook of the forbidden fruit, because he was beguiled by the serpent, which suggested to Eve that, if she ate of that fruit, she would become like to God, acquiring the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore the Lord said: “Behold, Adam is become like one of us.” (Gen. iii, 22.) God said this ironically, and to upbraid Adam for his presumption. But,

after the Son of God had become man, we could truly say : Behold, God is become like one of us. "Look, then, O man!" exclaims St. Augustine, "thy God is made thy brother." He could have assumed the nature of an angel; but no, he would take on himself our very flesh : and he often gloried in this, oftentimes styling himself the Son of man. Hence we have every right to call him our brother.

### 3. What is this mystery called ?

*The Incarnation of the Son of God.*

By the word incarnation we understand that the Son of God took to himself a human body and a soul, and united to them, inseparably, his divine nature, so as to be but one person. This great fundamental truth of our religion is beyond our conception, and therefore is called the mystery of the incarnation.

The holy Church is struck with awe at the contemplation of this great mystery : "I considered thy works and was afraid."\* If God had created a thousand other worlds, a thousand times greater and more beautiful than the present, it is certain that this work would be infinitely less grand than the incarnation of the Word : "He hath showed might in his arm." It required all the omnipotence and infinite wisdom of God to execute the great work of the incarnation, in order to unite human nature to a divine person, and that a divine person should so humble himself as to take upon him human nature.

In order to thank our Lord for his infinite goodness in becoming man, good Catholics are accustomed to say the *Angelus*, morning, noon, and night ; for the *Angelus* is, as it were, a short history of our Lord's incarnation. Many

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\* Resp. iii, Nocturn. ii, in Fest.



indulgences are attached by the Church to this pious practice. Again, in assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, we are taught to bend our knee twice, in honor of, and in gratitude for, our Lord's incarnation: first, during the Creed, at the words, "*Et Homo factus est*" ("And he was made man"); and, secondly, at the "*Verbum caro factum est*" ("The Word was made flesh"), which comes in the last Gospel, just before the end of the Mass. It is related, by a certain ancient writer, that it happened on one occasion that a young man, who was present at Mass, neglected to genuflect at the words, "And he was made man," in the Creed, whereupon the devil appeared to him in a terrible form, armed with a club, and thus addressed him: "Ungrateful wretch! dost thou not thank the God who was made man for thee? If he had done for us what he has done for thee, we should be ever prostrate before him, thanking and adoring him. And thou dost not even make a sign of thankfulness." So saying, he struck him rudely with his club and left him, like Heliodorus of old, half dead with pain and fear. (St. Liguori on the Commandments.)

#### **4. How many natures are there in Jesus Christ?**

*Two: the nature of God, and the nature of man.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man. He is God, of the substance of his Father; he is man, of the substance of his Mother, having a rational soul and human body like ours. As God, he is the natural Son of God the Father, begotten from all eternity. As man, he is the natural Son of the Blessed Virgin. She brought forth, in time, the same Son whom God the Father has begotten from all eternity. As God, Christ is equal to the Father in all things—he is as powerful, as wise, as holy, as just

as the Father. As man, Christ is less than the Father. Speaking of his divine nature, Christ says: "I and the Father are one" (John x, 30); but, speaking of his human nature, he says: "The Father is greater than I." (John xiv, 28.)

As God, Christ is everywhere; as man, he is only in heaven and in the blessed sacrament. As man, he suffered hunger, thirst, and cold, but, as God, he fed the famishing multitudes in the wilderness by his Almighty power; as man, he prayed to his Father, but, as God, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm. As God, he said: "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me" (John xiv, 10); and, "He that seeth me seeth the Father" (Ibid. xiv, 9). But, as man, "He cried with a loud voice on the cross, saying: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii, 46); and, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii, 46). As man, he died on the cross, but, as God, he raised himself to life, and ascended to the right hand of his heavenly Father. There are, then, two natures in Jesus Christ: the nature of God and the nature of man.

### **5. How many persons are there in Jesus Christ?**

*In Christ there is only one person: the person of the Son of God.*

From the beginning of the world God has never ceased to perform miracles for the benefit of men,—miracles so great that they will be the admiration of all nations to the end of time. But, of all the wonders which he has wrought, one stands forth preëminent. So surprising does the Prophet Isaias find it, that he calls it the inventions of God: "Make known to the people the inventions of God."

(Isa. xii, 4.) Indeed it would seem that in this miracle God has been careful, as it were, to study the manner in which he might best communicate and manifest himself to us. This great wonder is the incarnation, wherein the Word of the Father (the Son of God) unites himself to the human nature in so intimate a manner that God and man are but one person, that person being both God and man.

The secrets of this union will always remain incomprehensible to human reason, and known to God only; and so firm and indissoluble is it that, as St. Denis says, "what it has once joined, never has been, nor ever can be, separated." "Love," says this saint, "is a unitive virtue, which transforms the lover into the one beloved object, and makes the two but one." Now, what no love in the world ever did, the love of God has done for man. It never happened in the world that, of the lover and of the object beloved, love effectually made but one and the same thing. This was a marvel that seemed reserved for heaven, where the Father and the Son are indeed truly one. So great, however, was the love of God for man, that God united himself to him in such a manner as to make God and man one and the same person—so that God is truly man, and man truly God; and all that is truly proper to man may be truly and properly said of God himself.

Whilst we then believe that there are two natures in Jesus Christ, we also believe that there is only one person in Christ. For, as the reasonable soul and the body are one man, so God and man are but one person, one Christ; and this person is the divine person, the Son of God. It is he who did everything that is related of him in the Gospel; but sometimes he employed his divine, and sometimes his human nature, to accomplish his designs.

But, whether he fasted or fed the hungry, whether he prayed or worked miracles, suffered or triumphed, it was the one person of Jesus Christ who accomplished all. The knowledge of this truth will help us to understand better the answer to the next question.

### **6. Why did the Son of God become man ?**

*To be able to suffer and die in atonement for our sins, and to save us from hell.*

We know that our first parents, Adam and Eve, transgressed their Maker's law, and in an evil hour undid the glorious work of their creation. Plunged in an instant into an abyss of miseries, they did not attempt to rise, and indeed had not left themselves the power. Their posterity, spread over the earth, adding sin to sin, insult to insult, carried with them their rebellion and their impieties. The iniquities of the father were multiplied in his children ; one age improved on the vices of another ; till at last almost the only intercourse between heaven and earth was the voice of crimes crying aloud for vengeance. And what was there to counteract the just demand ? God stood not in need of these, his worthless creatures ; poor earth-born man had no connection with the self-sufficient happiness of the Lord, who in one moment might have crushed him without regret.

Hell, on the other hand, raised up its baleful voice, and demanded, with seeming equity, that he who had followed in guilt should follow also in punishment. The essential attribute of a God,—impartial justice,—seemed to second the terrible demand. And, in this fearful moment, what was it that saved us ? The unaccountable, incomprehensible love of God for the most wretched of his creatures.



His impetuous love was too powerful for his justice, and, relenting into compassion, he pardoned us.

And in what manner? The Son of God himself became man to atone for our sins. He became man, to give for us infinite honor and praise to his heavenly Father; to offer to him, for us, acts of atonement and thanksgiving, and to obtain for us all the graces necessary for our sanctification and salvation.

Jesus was all innocent and holy, the only Son of God, loved by his Father with an infinite love; and yet, because he charged himself with our sins, because he took upon himself the semblance of a sinner, God punished him with merciless rigor. On the night of his bitter passion, our blessed Redeemer knelt in the Garden of Olives: his soul was sad unto death; his face was deadly pale; he trembled in every limb, and his heart's blood oozed out through every pore of his body. He struggled and prayed; he implored his heavenly Father to deliver him from the shame and the torments that awaited him. "O my Father! if it be possible, take away this chalice from me." But, no; God's outraged justice must be satisfied. Jesus has taken upon himself all our sins, he must also endure all our punishments. God treats his own beloved Son with justice, without mercy, in order that he might treat us with unbounded mercy. For our sakes God delivered up his beloved Son to the fury of his enemies, to all the malice of the demons, to the most infamous outrages, to the most atrocious punishments. For our sakes he made his only-begotten Son to become an object of horror and malediction, for it is written in the word of God: "Accursed is he who hangs on the cross." (Deut. xxi, 23; Gal. iii, 13.) And Jesus, the God of all glory, hung

on the cross, shed his blood and died on the cross, in expiation of the sins of the world. His divine blood became a fountain of health to wash out all our iniquities; a sacrifice of infinite value to appease the justice of the Father, and to save us from hell.

## **7. Who was chosen to be the Mother of God?**

### *The Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Immediately after the fall of our first parents, God promised that a woman would be born holy enough to become the Mother of the Redeemer,—the Mother of Jesus Christ. This happy woman is the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the Revelations of St. Bridget (in Serm. Angel., c. v), we read as follows: “When the visible world was created, there was still existing in the mind of God another world, with all its beauty and splendor, which was still to be created: and this world was the Blessed Virgin Mary. From this world was to come greater glory for God, greater joy for the angels, and greater blessings for all those men who wished to apply to her goodness, than there should come from the vast world you live in.” It is, indeed, with truth that the Blessed Virgin, in this Revelation, is called “a less world,” because she was chosen to become the Mother of God; she was chosen as the blessed tabernacle, in which the Son of God was to be conceived and made man, and, when carrying him in her sacred womb, she carried the whole world, as it were: for she carried him in whom all things are contained. Truly, he who is mighty, has done great things in her and for her.

**8. By whom was the Son of God conceived ?**

*The Son of God was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, therefore, is called the Mother of God.*

Let us picture to our minds that little house of Nazareth and the room in which Mary is praying, all alone, at the time of the annunciation of the incarnation of the Son of God. We gaze on her in silence : we think of her purity, her lowliness, of the graces which adorn her soul, and make her a living temple of God. Suddenly there steals through the open casement a ray of soft light ; it shines around this sweet Virgin, growing brighter and brighter the longer it shines. She raises her head and sees, standing before her, the beautiful form of one of God's angels. His silvery voice breaks the solemn stillness. He announces the glad tidings that she is to be the Mother of God. The words addressed to her by the angel are these : "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou amongst women." On hearing these words, Mary was greatly troubled. She thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be. She had so humble an opinion of herself, that she became confused at hearing from an angel that she was "full of grace," and "blessed among women." "Fear not, Mary," said the angel, "for thou hast found grace with God." He then told her how the Son of God was about to become man, and how great and powerful he should be ; how extensive his reign was to be, and how there should be no end to his kingdom, and that this great King had made choice of her as his Mother : "Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus ; he shall be great, and he shall be called the Son of the Most High."

The Virgin listened to the angel with great attention, and the wonderful things he promised somewhat surprised her ; for, being a virgin, she could not well understand how they could be performed. "How shall this be done," said she to the angel, "because I know not man?" The angel, in reply, assured her that no concurrence of man was required, for that she was to conceive in a miraculous way, through the power of the Holy Ghost: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And to convince her that nothing was impossible to God, the angel went on to tell Mary what had happened to her cousin Elizabeth, who was very old, and, though married many years, had no children, yet was soon to have a son: "And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren."

The Blessed Virgin, having thus learned that she was to become the Mother of the Son of God by the omnipotent power of the Holy Ghost, bowed to the divine decree and said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word." (Luke i, 38.)

No sooner had she uttered those words than the Holy Ghost formed of her purest blood a perfectly organized body; the sacred soul of Jesus Christ was at the same moment created and united to that body, and the divine Word himself with both body and soul, in unity of person, so that God became man, and man was made God: "*Et Verbum caro factum est*:" "And the Word was made flesh."

The feast by which we commemorate this great mystery of the incarnation, is called the feast of the Annunciation.



This feast was celebrated at first by particular churches. But in the course of time its celebration became universal, and was sanctioned by the Council of Toledo, in the year 656. In the East it was observed from the earliest times, and was confirmed as a general feast in the Council of Constantinople, in the year 692. The twenty-fifth of March is the day fixed upon for its celebration, because, according to St. Augustine, "it is an old tradition, adopted by the Church, that the incarnation of the Son of God took place on the twenty-fifth of March."

### **9. Why is the Mother of God called a virgin?**

*The Mother of God is called a virgin, because she was a virgin both before, in, and ever after, the birth of Christ.*

The Blessed Virgin Mary was sanctified in the very first instant of her immaculate conception. In that very moment she received the perfect use of reason, that she might begin to acquire merit for heaven. This is in accordance with the general opinion of theologians, who say that the most perfect way in which God sanctifies a soul is by its own merits. It is therefore to be believed that God sanctified the Blessed Virgin in this most perfect way, because he had chosen her to become his Mother. Thus, from the beginning of her life, Mary knew God, and knew him so that "no tongue" (as an angel declared to St. Bridget) "will ever express how clearly this Blessed Virgin understood God's greatness in that very first moment of her existence." (Serm. Ang., c. xiv.) And thus enlightened, she instantly offered her entire self to her Lord, dedicating herself, without reserve, to his service, love, and glory.

She often repeated this act of dedication of herself to God. When she was three years old, she presented herself

in the temple, and in a most solemn manner consecrated her virginity to God. So much did she love the virtue of virginity, that, to preserve it, she would have been willing to renounce even the immense dignity of Mother of God. This we understand from her answer to the Archangel Gabriel, "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" and from the words which she afterwards added, "Be it done to me according to thy word:" signifying that she gave her consent, on condition that, as the angel had assured her, she should become a mother only by the power of the Holy Ghost, and thus remain a virgin forever. Jesus Christ, then, became man in her, and was born of her, without any loss whatever to her virginal purity.

#### **10. On what day do we celebrate the birth of Christ?**

*On the twenty-fifth day of December, which is called Christmas-day.*

About nine months after the twenty-fifth of March, Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. We celebrate the nativity, or birthday of our Lord, on the twenty-fifth of December, which is called Christmas-day. He was born into this world at a most inclement season of the year, and in a place where no comfortable things could be procured. The divine Infant was wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and yet this Infant is the Lord of heaven and earth. Although stretched in an humble, comfortless crib, he dwells, nevertheless, in the bosom of the Father; although he utters no word, he is still the Word and Wisdom of God. He is clothed in poor and scanty raiment, yet is he the splendor of eternal light, whence all his creatures derive their brightness and their beauty. He subjects himself to the sufferings of infancy, and is at the

same time the joy and beatitude of angels. He requires the nourishment of ordinary babes, although on his liberal hand every creature in the universe depends for needful sustenance. He cannot move without being carried in some one's arms, although he gives motion to the heavens. The Lord of heaven and earth became a little child to make himself so much the more lovely to us, and win our hearts for himself.

### **11. Where was Jesus born?**

*Jesus was born in a stable, at Bethlehem.*

The Prophet Micheas had foretold that the Redeemer was to be born in Bethlehem. The reason why Bethlehem became the birthplace of Jesus Christ instead of Nazareth, where his blessed Mother lived, was this:—Previous to the birth of our Lord the Roman emperor, Cæsar Augustus, had published an edict commanding all Roman subjects to go and be enrolled in their country. So Joseph departed, with his spouse Mary, to have their names enrolled in Bethlehem. As soon as they arrived there, the time for Mary's delivery was at hand, and Joseph went about the town looking for a lodging. But being poor, they were driven away by every one, even from the inn where the other poor had been received. So they went away from the town in the night, and, having found a cave, Mary entered. But Joseph said to her: "My spouse, how can you pass the night in this damp, cold place? Do you not see that this is a stable for animals?" But Mary answered: "O my Joseph! it is nevertheless true that this cave is the royal palace in which the Son of God chooses to be born." And the hour of the birth being come, whilst Joseph was rapt in ecstasy and the holy Virgin was kneeling in

prayer, all at once she saw the cave illumined by a brilliant light, and casting her eyes upon the ground, beheld there the Son of God already born: a tender infant, weeping and trembling with cold: and thus she first adored him as her God. Then she placed him in her bosom, wrapped him in the poor swaddling-clothes which she had with her, and finally laid him on a little straw in the manger.

The place in which our Redeemer was born is about two hundred paces to the south of Bethlehem. It is a cave in the side of a rock, and is about forty feet in length, by twelve in width at the entrance, but becomes narrower towards the roof. The vault is supported by three pillars of porphyry. In the centre there is a niche, intersected by an altar, on which the holy sacrifice is offered up. This altar is lighted up by thirty-five lamps; one of them, and that the richest, being the gift of Louis XII, King of France. It is believed that it was in this recess the holy Virgin brought forth the Son of God. This part of the grotto is lined with white marble, incrustated with jasper, and around it is a circle of silver, radiating like the sun, with the following inscription: "*Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est.*" "Here was born Jesus Christ of the Virgin Mary." The Infant, when born, was laid in a sort of crib, formed of wood. This precious relic was long since transported to Rome, and the place in which it has been laid is incrustated with marble.

## 12. Who came first to adore the Infant Jesus?

1, *Pious shepherds from the neighborhood*; 2, *the Magi, or the three kings from the East.*

The birth of Christ caused universal joy in heaven, in limbo, and on earth. The angels came down to adore



their King in the crib. They intoned the glad anthem, "Glory be to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." The Archangel St. Gabriel, as we read in the revelations of Blessed Mary d'Agreda, went to the just souls detained in limbo, to announce to them also the glad tidings; and those souls rejoiced exceedingly, because now heaven was soon to be opened to them by the Redeemer.

On earth, it was to pious shepherds, and to the Magi of the East, that the glad tidings were first communicated.

### **13. How did the shepherds and the Magi hear of the birth of Christ?**

*The shepherds heard it from an angel, and the Magi knew it by a miraculous star.*

The way in which the shepherds heard of the birth of Christ, is related in the Gospel of St. Luke. It is as follows:

"And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of the Lord shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to to them: Fear not; for behold I bring you tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.

"And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: Let us go

over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. And, seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen." (Luke ii.)

The good shepherds communicated the glad tidings to others, and all were filled with astonishment: "All that heard wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds." (Ibid. ii.)

Jesus came on earth to teach us, by his example, the great lesson of humility and poverty. So he chose a cold stable for his birthplace. Lying in a crib, he preaches to the rich to despise the pleasures and vanities of the world, and not to be attached to glory and wealth, but to make themselves the friends of God, by using their riches to assist the distressed. The lesson which Jesus in the manger teaches to the poor is, to bear patiently the inconveniences of poverty, and all the afflictions of that state of life in which divine Providence has placed them; to console themselves with the thought that, by their poverty and privations, they bear a closer resemblance than do the rich to our divine Saviour; that, though they have to contend with all the ills of life, yet such was the state the Lord had chosen for himself. He was born in a stable, he lived in poverty, and he died in poverty.

At the time when our blessed Lord was born upon earth, other nations besides the Jews were in daily expectation of his coming. The traditions which had been handed down from father to son for many hundred years, and the prophecies which had become more generally known during the

captivity of the Jews and under the Grecian empire,—all pointed out that the time was now at hand when the Saviour of all nations would appear in the land of the Jews.

The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, then, had scarcely been announced to the poor shepherds, when it was made known, by the appearance of a star, to the Magi, or wise men of the East. The word Magi means wise and learned; and it is generally supposed that the Magi, who came from the East, probably from Arabia or Chaldea, to adore the infant God, were very rich and powerful personages. A great many writers are of opinion that they were kings. A very old tradition bestows on the three Magi the names of Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. And it is under these names that they are venerated by the church of Cologne, which lays claim to the possession of their relics. About the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, these three Magi, deeply learned in the science of astronomy, one night discovered a star, much larger and brighter than any of the other stars; and as they were not ignorant that an old prophet named Balaam had foretold that about this time a divine child should be born, who would redeem the world, and that his appearance should be made known by the sudden appearance of a bright and very extraordinary star, they had no doubt of the birth of the great Redeemer, and they set out at once for Jerusalem, to adore him.

**14. How did Herod, King of Jerusalem, learn the news of the birth of Christ?**

*He learned it from the Magi, who said that they had come to adore the divine Infant, who was born King of the Jews.*

When the Magi entered on their journey, they perceived the star shining over their heads, and moving on before

them, as a guide pointing out the way. When they arrived at Jerusalem, the star disappeared, and they began to ask all they met, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and we are come to adore him."

The news of a king lately born is soon spread through Jerusalem, and the whole city is at once in commotion. Herod, knowing that his title to the crown was conferred on him by the Romans, and not by the Jews, experienced great alarm at the inquiry made by the Magi, lest the child should become his rival, and sooner or later pull the crown from his head. He at once called together the priests and the doctors of the law, to tell him in what place it was said "the Christ should be born." The priests and scribes told him that the prophets had said that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Then Herod, having sent for the Magi, and having learned from them the precise time of the star's appearance, sent them to Bethlehem, saying to them: "Go, and diligently inquire after the child, and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him." This was altogether a pretence on the part of this cruel and haughty prince. He had no idea of paying him adoration: his real object in finding him out was that he might the more easily put him to death.

The Magi, having taken leave of Herod, left the city, and entered on the way to Bethlehem. They were no sooner out of Jerusalem than the star appeared again, and went before them as a guide. When they arrived at Bethlehem, it stopped its course, and stood still over the place where the Infant Jesus lay. Then the Magi, rejoicing, entered the house, and seeing Jesus in the arms of his



Mother, they fell upon their knees, and adored their God. Then opening their treasures, they presented the holy Babe with their offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh : gold, as to a king ; frankincense, as to a God ; and myrrh, as to a man. According to the tradition, to which we have alluded above, Caspar offered the gold, Melchior offered the frankincense, and Balthazar offered the myrrh. The Magi, having paid their adorations to Jesus Christ, began to think of returning to Herod, that he too might come and adore the infant God ; but God warned them in their sleep not to go back to that wicked king : and so they returned, by another way, to their own country, and frustrated the wicked designs of the cruel prince.

It is generally believed, and with good grounds, that the Magi paid their acts of adoration to Jesus Christ in the stable in which he was born. This is the opinion of many fathers of the Church. "The Child Jesus," says St. John Chrysostom, "was adored in the manger and in the stable by the Magi." St. Cyprian and St. Augustine say that the Magi found and adored the King of kings in a poor shed. St. Augustine and St. Thomas are of opinion that the Magi paid their homage to the Child Jesus on the thirteenth day after his birth. The Church commemorates the adoration of Jesus by the Magi, on the sixth of January. This day is called the feast of the Epiphany, which means manifestation ; and this feast is so called because it was on that day that Jesus Christ manifested himself to the Gentiles.\*

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\* The village of Bethlehem is beautifully situated on an eminence about six miles southeast of Jerusalem, in a district watered by a small rivulet, and richly covered with olives, vines, and fig-trees. The pious Empress Helen built a handsome church, in the form of a cross, over the grotto in which our Saviour was born, which remains to this day. The church was much embellished by Constantine, and the interior adorned with mosaic work. The body of the church is supported by forty white marble Corinthian columns,

On the fortieth day after his birth, named the day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, and commonly called Candlemas-day, Jesus Christ was presented in the temple. There was an old law made by God for the Jewish nation, that every first-born child should be offered up to God in the temple by the parents, and redeemed by the offering of some living creature. If the parents were rich, a lamb should be offered ; and if poor, a pair of pigeons, or two turtle doves. At the end of forty days, Mary repaired to the temple, that she might fulfil this law : though Mary was descended from the kings of Judea, yet she was too poor to offer a lamb, and Jesus, to whom everything belonged, was redeemed by a pair of doves ! At the time that the Blessed Virgin presented her Son in the temple, she herself submitted to another law of Moses, by which all women who had brought forth a child were, for a time, considered unclean, and prohibited from touching anything consecrated to the Lord. If they brought forth a son, they were considered unclean for forty days ; and, if a daughter, the time was extended to eighty days. At the expiration of this time, they repaired to the temple for their purification, and offered the sacrifices prescribed by the law. Assuredly this law did not oblige the Blessed Virgin,—she well knew from its words that it could not bind her,—for she was not an ordinary mother. Her purity, so far from being sullied by the birth of Jesus Christ, was only rendered brighter by his virtue. But, as the public was not then acquainted with her privileges, submit to it she would, that she might give an example of

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in four rows. Connected with the building, are Latin, Greek, and Armenian convents, having each their several doors opening into the chapel of the Holy Manger.

obedience and humility. From Mary's conduct on this occasion, Christian mothers should learn to offer their children from their earliest years; and should, too, learn to pay to God the tribute of praise and thanksgiving before his holy altar, after they have brought forth children. When they can with safety leave their houses, the first visit should be to the Lord's temple, to return him thanks for the happy delivery, and to pray to him that he may shower down his blessings on themselves and their children.

At that time there lived an old man in Jerusalem called Simeon; and as soon as Joseph and Mary had entered the porch of the temple, they were met by this good old man, who had been for many years hoping that before his death he might see the Saviour: for he had received a promise from the Holy Spirit that he should not die until he had seen the Anointed of the Lord. So, when he met the parents bringing the Child Jesus, he took the Infant in his arms, and cried out in a transport of joy: "Now, O Lord! dost thou dismiss thy servant, according to thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people, Israel." Then he foretold to Mary that, one day, a sword of sorrow should pierce her heart from witnessing the sufferings of her Son. After Jesus had been presented in the temple, Joseph and Mary returned home with him. The presentation of Jesus and the purification of Mary is kept as a feast by the Church, on the second of February, called the Purification of the Blessed Virgin. This day is also called Candlemas-day, from the candles blessed at the Mass, and put into the hands of the priest and people, which they carry in

procession round the church, as the holy Simeon carried in his arms the Infant Jesus. The custom of bearing lighted candles on the feast of the Purification was introduced by Pope Gelasius, after he had abolished the *Lupercalia*, or feast in honor of the god Pan, which had been celebrated in the month of February.

### **15. How did Herod receive the news of the birth of Christ?**

*Fearing that the Infant might soon become King of the Jews, he sought to destroy it, by causing all the male infants, in and around Bethlehem, to be murdered.*

King Herod, that jealous and ambitious prince, finding that the Magi were unmindful of his orders, and did not return, but went home another way, foamed with rage, and resolved that Jesus should not escape out of his hands, but should die at once. To succeed in his design, he issued an order,—the most inhuman order that a tyrant could issue,—that all the male children, two years old and under, in Bethlehem and the surrounding country, should be put to death. His own son, even, was not spared in this general massacre,—a circumstance which made the Emperor Augustus say that “it was better to be Herod’s pig than his son.” In issuing this cruel order, he thought that he took the most effectual way of destroying the Infant, and of preventing him from ever becoming King of the Jews.

As he had ordered, all the poor innocent children, born within the two last years in and about Bethlehem, were massacred. An infant made him tremble on his throne; and to make sure of the death of that infant, he drenched the country with blood, and made the air resound with the shrieks and lamentations of afflicted mothers; and yet,



though many children were butchered, he, whose life alone was aimed at, escaped the barbarous sentence.

### 16. How was Jesus saved ?

*St. Joseph, admonished by an angel, retired with him and his Mother into Egypt, and did not return till after the death of Herod.*

Almighty God knew how to defeat the wicked intentions of Herod ; for, one night, when the holy family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, were asleep, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, and said to him : “ Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt, and stay there until I shall tell thee ; for, it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him.”

When Joseph heard the command to leave his native country, and to fly off with the Child and his Mother, he rose at once, went to awake Mary, who was sleeping near her Son, and told her the orders of the angel. The young mother, comprehending the necessity of this hasty and stealthy departure, immediately arose, took up the sleeping babe, wrapped him up in his clothes, and bearing him in her arms, left her native town, seated on an ass, which St. Joseph had procured for the long and tedious journey. The night on which they set out was cold, and many a mile had they to go, and many a day and night had they to travel, before they could reach their destination ; and whether they were to return or not was uncertain. Oh, what a spectacle ! The Master of the universe, the King of kings, flying to save his life when only a few days born ! What must he have suffered during so long and so painful a journey—fleeing from the fury of a tyrant, without aid or protection, except that afforded by his Mother and St.

Joseph! From the example of Jesus, persecuted in his tender years, let us learn to submit with resignation to the decrees of divine Providence, who rules everything with infinite goodness and wisdom.

### 17. Who was St. Joseph?

*St. Joseph was the foster-father of Jesus, and the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

St. Joseph was one of the greatest saints that ever lived on this earth. For this reason God the Father chose him to be the foster-father of his Son, Jesus Christ, and the chaste spouse of our Blessed Lady. These two most holy personages, who were dearer to God than all the angels and saints in heaven, were confided by him to the care of St. Joseph. He was to guard the divine Infant and his Mother. He carried the Lord of heaven and earth into Egypt, to save him from the bloodthirsty tyrant, Herod. He worked at the trade of a carpenter for the support of the Child Jesus and his Mother, and was to both in all things like a tender and affectionate father. It is a good thing, therefore, to choose St. Joseph as a patron in all spiritual and temporal affairs; for our dear Lord will not refuse anything to him by whom he was so much loved and honored upon earth.

The holy virgin, St. Teresa, was distinguished for her particular devotion to St. Joseph. She celebrated his feasts with the greatest solemnity, thanked him often for the care which he took of our Blessed Lady and the Child Jesus, and recommended to him all her wants. Listen to what she says on the subject of devotion to this great saint:—

“I took for my advocate and master the glorious St.

Joseph, and I recommended myself much to him. I cannot remember having asked him for anything which I did not obtain. I am quite amazed when I consider the great favors our Lord has shown me through the intercession of this blessed saint, and the many dangers, both of soul and body, from which he has delivered me. It seems that to other saints our Lord has given power to succor us in only one kind of necessity; but this glorious saint, I know by my experience, assists us in all kinds of necessities. Hence our Lord, it appears, wishes us to understand that, as he was obedient to him when on earth, for he was called his father, so now in heaven he grants him whatever he asks. Would that I could persuade all men to be devout to this glorious saint! I have never known any one who was truly devoted to him, and who performed particular devotions in his honor, that did not advance more in virtue, for he assists in a special manner those souls who recommend themselves to him." ("Life of St. Teresa.")

**18. Where did Jesus spend his childhood, after his return from Egypt?**

*At Nazareth, where he lived obedient to his virgin Mother and St. Joseph. (St. Luke ii, 51.)*

The holy family, it is believed, lived seven years in Egypt. At the end of that time, Herod having died, an angel of the Lord appeared again to Joseph in his sleep, and ordered him to return to the land of Israel. "Arise," said he, "take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead that sought the life of the child." Then Joseph arose, and, taking Jesus and Mary, entered upon his journey back to his native country. Though Herod was dead, his son Archelaus,

his successor, might, too, seek the life of Jesus; and fearing this, St. Joseph, warned by God, avoided the province of Judea, and went to Nazareth, Mary's birth-place, and there took up his residence. Nazareth being the residence of Jesus, he was called a Nazarean, thus fulfilling the prophecy: "He shall be called a Nazarean."

According to the unanimous accounts of travellers, the most holy house of the Virgin was situated on the declivity of the hill on which the town of Nazareth was built. The site, so precious in the eyes of the faithful, after having escaped the sacking of Nazareth, under Vaspasian, in the year 74 of our Lord, remained concealed amongst the ruins of the town, until the Empress Helen had the good fortune of discovering it. She erected a magnificent church over the precious ruin. In the year 1291, the whole of Palestine fell under the power of the infidels; twenty-five thousand Christians were put to the sword, and two hundred thousand were brought into slavery. The holy places were exposed to profanation of every kind. The church of Nazareth, built by pious Helen, was subverted. The most holy house of the Virgin alone escaped the general ruin. On the tenth of May, under the pontificate of Nicholas IV, a house was seen resting on an elevated spot in Dalmatia, where it was well known no house had ever been seen before. The house was small, and its plan was rather novel. Its sudden appearance excited no little surprise. The inhabitants of the town of Tersatz ran to the spot in crowds, and their astonishment was increased when the curate of the locality, seriously ill up to that time, appeared among his flock, and announced to them that he had just been miraculously cured, and that this unexpected recovery was only a con-



firmation of what had been lately revealed to him: that the little house which excited their wonder, was the very house which the Blessed Virgin occupied in Nazareth. At the end of three years and seven months, the holy house disappeared, and the inhabitants of the Marches of Ancona were filled with astonishment at seeing one day a strange house near the town of Recanato, in the territory of Loretto. The holy house was invisibly transported from Dalmatia, over the Adriatic Sea, to the coast of Italy. The second translation had taken place on the 10th of December, 1294, under the pontificate of Celestine V. In a short time the holy house attracted the attention, first, of the country round, then of Italy at large, and at length of the whole Christian world. The miracle was everywhere heard with joy and admiration, and everywhere welcomed with implicit, unsuspecting faith. Princes and prelates, rich and poor, hastened with pious alacrity to venerate the terrestrial abode of the Incarnate Word, and to implore the aid and protection of his Virgin Mother. Gifts and votive offerings accumulated; a magnificent church was erected; gold, silver, and diamonds blazed round every altar, and heaps of treasures loaded the shelves of the sacristy; various edifices rose around the new temple, and Loretto became, as it still remains, a large and populous city. (Power's Catechism.)

**19. What did Jesus do when he was twelve years old?**

*He went with his parents to Jerusalem, where he spent three days in the temple.*

The Gospel does not tell us what Jesus did from his infancy until he was twelve years old, except "that he grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom, and the grace of

God was in him," and that "he was subject to Joseph and Mary, his mother." As Jesus grew up in wisdom and holiness, so, too, should we advance in virtue and piety as we advance in years; that we may obtain the grace of God, and all the blessings of heaven. And as Jesus was subject to his parents, so we, too, must be obedient to our parents and to all our lawful superiors: for, seeing the Lord of heaven and earth obedient to men to give us the example of obedience, we would betray a great want of faith by refusing obedience to any of our lawful superiors, when their commands are not sinful.

Now, when Jesus was twelve years old, he went up to the temple of Jerusalem with his Mother and St. Joseph. The Jews were in the habit of celebrating every year a solemn feast, called the Pasch. This feast was prescribed by the law of Moses to the Jews. To observe this feast, they used to go up, every year, to Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary attended regularly at this festival, and performed in the temple what the Lord prescribed. When Jesus was twelve years old, he accompanied them. To attend at this paschal feast, the Jews, in going from the country to Jerusalem, were in the habit of travelling in large companies or parties. A great many from the same place would join together and make a large travelling party, so as to be more safe from the attacks of robbers. The holy family travelled to Jerusalem and back in one of these companies. The eighth and last day of the festival being over, they set out on their return to Nazareth, and the Child Jesus remained behind, in Jerusalem, without their knowing it. Thinking that he was among some of the companies, they went a day's journey before they felt any uneasiness about him. Then they sought for him

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among their relations and acquaintances who were returning with them, but the child was not found anywhere. The afflicted parents, not finding him, went back to Jerusalem, to look for him there.

For three days, with great anxiety and grief, they searched through all the city, and still could not find him; but, at the end of the third day, they went into the temple, and, behold! they found Jesus sitting among the doctors of the Jewish law, asking them questions, listening to what they had to say, as if he wished to be better instructed. Jesus, being then full of knowledge and wisdom, required no information from the Jewish doctors. He could have taught all these doctors; but his humility was such, that he wished to appear as a little child requiring instruction. The doctors and all who heard him were astonished at his wisdom. They never heard such answers given before as were given on that occasion by a child of twelve years old; and they wondered exceedingly at his profound knowledge. The moment that Mary saw her Son, she forgot her grief; the sight of him filled her soul with joy, and she said: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." But Jesus answered them, saying: "How is it that you were seeking me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" By this answer Jesus Christ wished to teach us that, when there is question of God's work, no motive nor consideration should ever prevent us from performing it. The glory of God is far above everything else: a lesson to all parents never to divert their children from the service of God, if he calls them to his holy work.

It would be very interesting and edifying for us to know what our dear Saviour did and said during the eighteen

years that intervened between the time he was in the temple, and the beginning of his public life. But the Holy Scripture is altogether silent as to what occurred to the holy family during that period. However, a great many holy persons tell us that, during those years, Jesus helped St. Joseph by working at his trade, and gave his Mother as much assistance as his age and strength would allow. Jesus, with Mary and Joseph, led a life of ceaseless toil ; and he who might command legions of angels asked nothing from God for himself and his parents but their "daily bread."

Can there be a more consoling thought to all those Christians who, from their state, are obliged to spend their days in poverty, toil, and obscurity, than the reflection that Jesus Christ spent the greatest part of his life in retirement and obscurity, altogether unknown by those whom he came upon earth to save ? Perhaps, there is no period of our dear Lords's life that conveys more instruction than that called his hidden life, during which he performed nothing extraordinary ; during which those divine hands, which upheld the heavens and the earth, were employed at the coarse work of a carpenter's shop ; during which he ate his bread by the sweat of his brow. Then, equally as in after time, he set us those great examples of humility, silence, poverty, industry and retirement. Assuredly we cannot be placed in a state more conducive to our salvation than in that which Jesus Christ has preferred to all other states. Let us live in retirement, pray, be submissive and humble, and we shall gain heaven. Ah ! how many mistakes how many falls, how many crimes, perhaps, would we have avoided, had we always taken these wise precautions !



**20. What did Jesus do when he was thirty years old?**

*He went to the river Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist.*

When Jesus Christ was in his thirtieth year, and still living privately in the house of Nazareth, St. John the Baptist preached penance to the Jewish people, and exhorted them to prepare themselves for the arrival of the Messiah. He is called the forerunner of Christ, because he announced his coming to the Jews. When very young, he retired into the wilderness, where he led a very holy and penitential life, living on locusts and wild honey, and wearing a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist. After having lived for some time in the wilderness, more like an angel than a man, he went forth from it and passed through the country, preaching to the Jews that they should prepare themselves, by a sincere repentance, for the holy laws of the Messiah: "Prepare ye," he said, "the way of the Lord, and make straight his paths. Do penance! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The people flocked from Jerusalem and the other towns of Judea to hear his exhortations to penance; and, as a sign of their repentance, he baptized them in the waters of the Jordan. His baptism, however, was not the same as that instituted afterwards by Christ. About that time, Jesus Christ was thirty years old. To give the Jews an example of what they should do, and to teach them to be humble, Jesus himself came from Galilee, and presented himself before John to be baptized, as if he had been a sinner like other Jews. St. John was greatly amazed at the humility of Christ, and at first refused to baptize him, saying: "I ought to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus, answering,

said to him : Suffer it to be so, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice. Then John suffered him." And Jesus went down to the water and was baptized. Now, when Jesus was baptized, heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove upon him, and at the same time a voice from heaven was heard, saying : "Thou art my beloved Son : in thee I am well pleased."

### **21. What did Jesus do after his baptism ?**

*He went into the desert, where he spent forty days and nights in praying and fasting.*

After our divine Saviour had been baptized by John in the Jordan, he was led by the Holy Ghost into the desert, there to prepare himself, by prayer and fasting, for his public life or ministry. The desert into which he retired was a very wild and dreary place. In this desolate place he spent forty days and nights in most fervent prayer and in rigorous fast.

### **22. What happened to Jesus there ?**

*He permitted the devil to tempt him.*

After incessant prayer, and a fast so rigorous that, during forty days, he took no food, Christ allowed himself to be tempted by the devil. That wicked spirit, who is always watching how he may destroy holy souls, came to Jesus, and knowing that he must be hungry after so long a fast, began to tempt him, saying : "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But our Lord, knowing the malice of the wicked tempter, answered him, saying : "It is written : Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." The devil, seeing that there was no

likelihood of attaining his object in a dreary wilderness, as there was no tempting object around, took our blessed Saviour, by permission from God, conveyed him to Jerusalem, "and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple." Then the devil said to him: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written that he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone." These words were quoted by the devil from the Psalms of David, with the intention of tempting Jesus to pride. They had reference to Christ, and the devil repeated them, to show that he need not fear casting himself from the temple, as, if he were the Holy One, angels should bear him up.

But Jesus would not be tempted by Satan to do what he asked; so he said to him: "It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Satan, though twice baffled, would not desist, but still persevered, and made another attempt. He took Jesus up into a very high mountain, from which he showed him all the kingdoms of the earth, with the glory and riches of them: "All these will I give thee," said he, "if thou wilt fall down and adore me." How the devil could show at once to our Lord all the kingdoms of the world, with all the palaces, and courts, and splendors, and riches of these kingdoms, we cannot tell: but the Gospel tells us that all this magnificence and all these splendors were spread out by the devil at our Lord's feet to tempt him. But our Lord would not be tempted, but, turning to Satan, said to him: "Begone, Satan; for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve." Being thus, for the third time, repulsed, Satan "left him, and angels came and ministered unto him."

**23. Why did Jesus permit the devil to tempt him?**

*To teach us, by his example, how to overcome temptations.*

Our Lord suffered himself to be tempted, to vanquish our enemy, and teach us by his example to overcome this enemy of our souls. If we wish to be crowned with eternal glory, we must first be proved by temptation. Jesus Christ, by fasting and praying in the desert, points out to us the means which we should adopt to overcome the assaults of the tempter. The arms that we should take up to vanquish our enemies, should be the same as those by which Jesus Christ conquered. These arms are, retirement, prayer, watching, and fasting. As Jesus Christ retired into the desert, so we should retire from the world; that is, withdraw our affections from its vanities and pleasures. As Jesus Christ prayed and fasted, so should we fast and pray, by strictly observing the fasts of the Church, by mortifying our senses, by not looking on dangerous objects, by praying fervently to God, morning and night, often repeating that part of the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." If we act in this manner, we shall overcome all the temptations of Satan, however violent they be; we shall repel all the assaults of the devil, and we shall have the consolation of being visited by the angels of heaven, who will congratulate us on the victory we have won. O what joy, what pleasure, does not a soul experience when it has put to flight the tempting spirit! The joy felt is a foretaste of the happiness of the saints in heaven, and a recompense which God grants in this life to those who are faithful to his love and service.



**24. What did Jesus do after he had left the desert?**

*He began to teach in public ; and of those who followed him, he chose twelve men, whom he called his apostles, or messengers.*

After Jesus Christ had left the desert, he began in Galilee to announce to the Jews the joyful tidings of the kingdom of heaven being at hand: "Do penance," said he, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Those who followed him were called his disciples. Of those he chose twelve, to attach particularly to himself, and called them apostles,—a word which means messengers ; because he intended to send them to preach the gospel throughout the whole world. The names of the apostles are : Simon Peter, the chief of them, Andrew, John the Evangelist, Philip, James, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Simon, Jude, James, and Judas Iscariot. When Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord, Matthias was chosen to fill his place.

**25. Did many follow Jesus Christ, when preaching in the towns and villages ?**

*The people came from all parts in crowds to see and hear him.*

Jesus Christ, accompanied by his apostles, went through all the towns and villages in Judea, preaching to the poor, instructing the ignorant, consoling the afflicted, and converting sinners. Wherever he appeared he was surrounded by thousands of attentive listeners ; and so enraptured were they by his discourses, and filled with wonder at his miracles, that they seemed to forget to take food for the support of their bodies. On one particular occasion, no fewer than five thousand followed him into the desert, so enraptured were they by his words. To give a detailed

account of all that Jesus Christ did and said during the three years of his public life, would be beyond the compass of this work. Let it suffice to know that he went about doing good to all, and drawing all hearts after him,—the hearts of children, the hearts of the just, and even the hearts of sinners. Now, whence came this wondrous power? Love is the free, spontaneous gift of the heart. Love cannot be forced; it cannot be bought. All the gold in the universe cannot purchase hearts. “Love me, if thou wilt be loved,” is the language which the human heart holds even to God himself. You may chain the limbs, but you cannot chain the heart. How, then, has Jesus won the love of so many hearts? How has he won the love of so many souls in every age,—souls who have loved him more than wealth, more than honor, more than life itself? It is only by love. It is because Jesus has loved more than mortal man can ever love. It is because he has loved with the unutterable love of God. The Gospel, indeed, tells us but little of the outward appearance of Jesus; but sufficient to convince us that the majesty of a sweet and winning love shone forth in all his actions. Born of a virgin, conceived, in the chaste womb of his blessed Mother, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, destined to be the perfect type of sinless humanity, we should have naturally expected beforehand that our blessed Lord would be far more beautiful than even Adam was when he came forth from the hands of God in all the bloom of innocence. Indeed, the prophets foretold that he was to be “beautiful exceedingly, beautiful above the children of men.” And if we watch the effect of our Lord’s appearance upon those around him, we shall see that a majestic sweetness shone forth in his every look, word, and gesture. He chose for

his emblem the lamb, the gentlest of all creatures ; and so brightly did this gentleness beam forth from his divine countenance, that, as soon as the holy Baptist beheld him, he cried aloud : " Behold, the Lamb of God !"

Our blessed Redeemer became a little child for the very purpose of winning our most tender love. He put on the innocent look of childhood in its most winning form. He veiled the light of intellect in his infant eyes, that there might shine through them more tenderly the playful loveliness of childhood. And at length, when he grew up and went forth into the world, the same winning sweetness accompanied him everywhere. As he was walking one day by the Sea of Galilee, he sees some fishermen mending their nets, and, addressing them, says : " Come, follow me ;" and in an instant, as soon as they see him, their eyes gaze upon him, and these rude fishermen are chained. They leave all to follow him, to be his for time and for eternity.

Nor is it only pure and loving souls that follow him. The people follow in crowds, even into the depths of the wilderness. They left their homes, their labors, their families. When once they had gazed on the beautiful face of Jesus, when once they had heard the words of life that flowed from his sweet lips, they could not rest without him. Without him, home was a desert ; with him, the desert bloomed like a rose. Little children are generally the best judges of kindness and gentleness. The Gospel tells us how little children loved our dear Lord, and how he loved to see them around him. When he passed through the towns and hamlets, the children flocked to him, and mothers brought their little ones to receive his blessing. When the apostles wished to send them away,

lest they should weary their divine Master, Jesus took the part of the little ones, and said : " Let these little children come to me, and do not send them away, for they resemble the blessed in heaven."

In order to win all hearts, Jesus made himself all to all. Had it been left to us to decide how God should appear and act, when he came on earth to live and converse with men, we should naturally have supposed that he would come with a beautiful and glorious body, incapable of pain or weariness. We might have thought that he would shut himself up like a king, in some gorgeous palace, to show himself only on high festivals, surrounded by dazzling splendor, and guarded by countless myriads of bright angels. Or we might have imagined that he would live like a hermit in some wild solitude, surrounded by darkness and mystery, wrapped in perpetual prayer and contemplation. But, no ; Jesus is a public man. He is open to all, by day and night. Rich and poor, gentle and simple, have equal access to him. He is exposed to the unthinking rudeness of the rabble, to the importunate curiosity of the intrusive, to the refined insolence of the proud. Day after day, he is subjected to the arrogance of the Pharisee, to the familiarity of the publican, even to the shameless gaze of the harlot. How great is the loving condescension of Jesus ! When we consider the sanctity of God,—that awful sanctity, which once by a deluge cleansed a guilty world,—we naturally think that, when Jesus came into personal contact with public and notorious sinners, his divine sanctity would flash through his humanity, and crush to the earth those guilty creatures. But, no. That he might banish our fears, Jesus even assures us that he " came, not to judge the world, but to save the world." " I am come,"



he says, "not to call the just, but to call sinners to repentance." One day, the Pharisees bring before him a woman taken in adultery, and they call on him to judge her. Jesus risks his own life to save her's. He exposes himself for her sake to all the taunts and calumnies of his enemies. And, when at last he is left alone with her, he releases her, and, without a word of reproach, bids her "go and sin no more."

### 26. Had Jesus any enemies?

*Yes; the carnal Jews, who served God merely from earthly motives.*

After all the great charity which our dear Saviour had bestowed on the Jews; after all the many great miracles which he had performed in their favor; notwithstanding the holy doctrine which he had preached, to lead them to true happiness here below, and to still greater bliss hereafter, he met only with ingratitude and unkindness at their hands. They closed their eyes to the light of his heavenly instructions and miracles, and refused to acknowledge him as the Messiah. They were a carnal people, serving God only from earthly motives, and caring very little for spiritual goods. Instead of loving him who had come to save them, they only hated him, and wished to see him banished from this world.

### 27. Why did the Jews hate Jesus Christ?

*Because he reprimanded them for their sins and vices, and preached to them humility and poverty.*

In his celebrated sermon on the Mount, preached by Christ in the beginning of his public ministry, he pointed out the way to heaven, by telling his hearers things that

appeared very strange to them, and the like of which they had never before heard. He told them that the poor in spirit were blessed ; and he declared the same of those who were meek and just. To those who mourn and are afflicted, he promised comfort in heaven, if they bore their grief with patience and submission to the will of God. He strongly inculcated the necessity of practising humility,—a virtue up to that time scarcely known,—by telling those around him that, unless their justice abounded more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they could never enter the kingdom of heaven. They might make an open profession of religion ; they might observe strictly the Jewish law ; they might fast and say long prayers, but our Lord tells them that all that will not save them, unless their goodness be greater and more real than the goodness of the Pharisees.

Such a heavenly doctrine was altogether opposed to the worldly spirit of the Jewish people. Instead of becoming Christ's friends and followers, they soon declared themselves his enemies.

### **28. Who were the greatest enemies of Christ ?**

*1, The Scribes, or the doctors of the law ; 2, the Pharisees, or those who pretended to keep the law better than others ; and, 3, the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the body, and the existence of spirits.*

The Scribes were men of learning among the Jews. They read and explained the law of God to the people, and were, on this account, greatly honored and respected by the Jews. The Sadducees were the followers of the false principles of Sadôk, the founder of that sect, who lived about 250 years B. C. They denied the resurrection of

the body, a future state, and the existence of spirits. The Pharisees were a sect among the Jews, noted for a stricter observance of rites and ceremonies and of the traditions of the elders, and whose pretended holiness led them to separate themselves from the other Jews. These were in constant prayer, they paid tithes according to the law, gave great alms, fasted twice in every week, and compassed sea and land to make a convert, and bring him to the knowledge of the true God.

The righteousness of the Pharisees, however, was nothing but outward show and ostentation. They did good only to be praised and admired by men ; but within, their souls were full of impurity and malice. They were lewd hypocrites, who concealed great vices under the beautiful appearance of love for God, charity to the poor, and severity to themselves. Their devotion consisted in exterior acts, and they despised all who did not live as they did ; they were strict in the religious observances of human traditions, but scrupled not to violate the commandments of God.

Now, our dear Saviour often reprimanded the Pharisees for their hypocritical piety. In the sermon on the Mount, Christ alluded to them in these words : " Unless your justice shall exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall enter not into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v, 20.)

The Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees seeing themselves severely censured and condemned by our dear Lord, they conceived against him an implacable hatred, which they betrayed on many occasions, by trying to catch him in his words, or to find fault with him in his conduct. Moreover, the mighty things which Christ did, the benefits which he bestowed upon those who flocked to him, the respect and admiration which the poorer class of the people entertained

for him, fired the Scribes and Pharisees with jealousy and devilish envy. They saw that their influence over the people was every day becoming less, that their authority was undervalued, and that there was every reason to expect that the people would soon abandon them and follow Jesus Christ.

**29. How far did these enemies go in their hatred to Jesus?**

*They went so far as to resolve to put him to death.*

The enemies of Jesus, envious of his reputation, to whom it was a continual eyesore to see him work miracles and gain the respect of the people, "gathered a council and said: What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone, all will believe in him. . . . Consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. . . . From that day, therefore, they devised to put him to death." (John xi, 47, 48, 50, 53.)

**30. Who promised to betray Jesus Christ?**

*Judas Iscariot, one of the apostles, promised to betray him for thirty pieces of silver.*

Whilst the enemies of Christ were planning how Jesus could be made away with, a traitor enters and removes their embarrassment. This traitor was Judas, one of the apostles of Jesus. He proposed at once to deliver him up to them. There was not much difficulty in arranging the sum that he was to receive for betraying his Lord and Master. This miserable man, Judas Iscariot, was, it seems, fond of money, for he had care of the purse in which Jesus and his apostles kept whatever they had



collected for the poor. His avarice induced him to steal small sums from this bag. The loss of his faith soon followed his theft. When the proposal of thirty pieces of silver,—a sum not exceeding six dollars of our money,—was made to him, he first listened, and then, thinking how pleasant it would be to have that sum, and how much he could do with it, he made up his mind to accept of the terms, and deliver up his God into the hands of those wicked men, who were, he knew, desirous for his blood. When Judas accepted of their proposal, they rejoiced; for now they were going to get their enemy into their hands. The terms of the sale of Jesus Christ's blood being fixed on, Judas went away, determined, as soon as an opportunity presented itself, to betray our Lord into the hands of his enemies.

The opportunity soon offered; for, on Thursday, in the last week of Jesus Christ's stay on earth, called Holy Thursday, our Lord was sitting with his twelve apostles at the supper-table. And while they were eating, Jesus said, "Amen, I say unto you, one of you that eateth with me shall betray me." The apostles, with the exception of Judas, were filled with sorrow at the words of our Lord, and they began, one by one, to ask, "Is it I?" Our Lord answered: "It is one of the twelve who dipped his hand with me in the dish." Judas, fearing that, if he remained silent, it would be a proof that he was the person to whom our Lord alluded, also said, "Is it I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him in a low tone, "Thou hast said it."

## THE FOURTH ARTICLE.

### **1. Which is the fourth article of the Creed ?**

*“ Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.”*

### **2. What does the fourth article of the Creed teach us ?**

*It teaches us that Jesus Christ suffered for us, died on the cross, and was laid in the grave.*

The simple narration of the frightful scenes of suffering through which our Saviour, the Lamb of God and the Victim of the divine vengeance, had to pass from the moment when he went forth with his apostles to the Garden of Olives, until he expired upon the cross, is shocking ; it cannot fail to leave a most wholesome impression on the heart, and enable us the better to understand the excess of his love for us, and our malice and ingratitude towards him. Let us accompany him in spirit through all the scenes of his unspeakable sufferings.

### **3. What did Jesus do after the last supper ?**

*He went into the Garden of Olives, where he prayed and suffered his agony.*

At the last supper, which our Lord took with his apostles, he instituted the blessed Eucharist, by changing bread and wine into his body and blood, which he distributed among his apostles, not even excepting the traitor Judas, who dared to receive it, and so was the first

to make an unworthy communion. No sooner had he received the sacred body of our Lord, than the devil took possession of him; and he arose at once and went out, in the darkness of the night, to perform his wicked deed. Shortly after the departure of Judas, Christ and his apostles, having first sung a hymn, left and proceeded towards the Mountain of Olives. Having arrived there, they entered a garden called Gethsemani. Our Lord, taking with him Peter, James and John, retired to a private part of the garden, saying to the other apostles and disciples: "Sit ye here, till I go yonder and pray." When Jesus had thus retired, he began to grow sorrowful and sad, and he said to the apostles: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: stay you here and watch with me." The anguish of soul which he experienced at this moment was so great as to throw him into the most bitter agony.

During his terrible agony in the garden, our Lord allowed such fear and sadness to possess his soul, that he would have died, had not his divine power upheld him. As he kneels amid the olive-trees, in the solemn stillness of the moonlit night, he sees and feels in spirit all the pain and outrage he is to suffer on the morrow. He is to give himself up into the hands of his enemies, and they shall glut their fiendish rage upon him. He already feels on his cheek the cold kiss of the traitor Judas. He feels the cords upon his hands. And now, as he stands within the judgment-hall, he sees the dark scowl upon the faces of his enemies. He hears the sentence of death pronounced against him. He feels the blows, the foul spittle upon his face, and all the while his soul is filled with unutterable horror; and he shrinks with disgust from the

thought, as a modest maiden would shrink from contact with an insulting crowd. Deeper in the night, another scene arises before him. The very dignity of manhood is gone from him, and in shame and nakedness he stands,—O God! what a fearful humiliation!—tied to a pillar like a slave, while his virgin flesh is torn by the cruel lash. Farther on, he sees a vast crowd deliberating on his fate, as he stands before them with the crown of thorns twining through his matted hair and piercing his temples, while the blood is filling up his hollow eyes and coursing down his cheeks. They fix on him a scowl of rage and hate. He hears the horrid yell ring wildly through the air: “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Jesus turns away in horror from the scene; but all is not over yet. He feels the heavy cross upon his bleeding shoulders. He sees his Mother's eyes bent upon him: and, oh! how his heart is wrung by the speechless agony of that fond look! He knows that not a pang can reach his heart but must pass through her virgin bosom. She must hear the nails crash through his tender hands and feet. She must see his tortured limbs stretched upon the cross. How his inmost soul is racked by the thought of his Mother's compassionate grief! And now, as he struggles against the natural repugnance for suffering, the anxious question arises in his mind,—the question that every one naturally asks before making a sacrifice: What shall I gain by all these sufferings? Will men profit by them? Will men use well the priceless treasures I have won for them at the cost of so much pain and labor? Will they remember me, and be grateful to me for all I have done for them? Alas, for man's ingratitude! At that moment there arise before the soul of Jesus all the sins, not of a



single night, nor of a single town only, but of the whole world, through the long course of ages, every moment of which brings forth its separate sin. The history of the world is before his mind, past, present, and to come; and now he, the Creator, shows, once for all, what a mighty grief its funeral deserves. Time and space are swept away from his mind, and he beholds all human beings at a glance. He knows them all by name. They are the work of his hands; but now he can only look in helpless agony upon the progress and punishment of their guilt. He looks into the inmost soul of each one, and sees it torn with horrid passions—men pale with rage, and withering away with jealousy and hate. He sees the oppressor and the oppressed, the seducer and the seduced. And with boundless love for them, he is searching the while their hearts, only to find them obstinately bent on their own ruin. He wishes, he yearns, to save them, but they will not be saved. He prays for them, but his very prayers only give them new graces to abuse; and all his loving favors only serve to increase their guilt in this world, and their torments in the next.

Jesus looks to his apostles, to his followers, and sees how they are hated and persecuted. He sees his priests condemned to the flames, his virgins torn with cruel scourges—and all for his name's sake. He looks forward to the time when the world shall call itself Christian, and yet even then, everywhere till the day of doom, the same sad scene comes up before him. What he expected was a burning love of God, and he sees it feebly struggling with the love of self. What he wished for was compassion with himself and with his blessed Mother, but he sees his sufferings forgotten, or, at best, remembered only as men

think of dead relations whom they have never seen, but whose benefits they enjoy. He gave men grace enough to follow him to the cross with a seraph's love. He looked to them to share his glorious shame, but he sees them turn from him in disgust, because his brow is blood-stained, and his cheek is deathly pale, though all for them. He sees the truth all but dying out, and heresy triumphant. He sees whole kingdoms sold and bartered for miserable interest. He sees good men cowardly, and bad men brave. He sees thousands of souls for whom he died, wandering about as sheep without a shepherd. He sees his Mother's name blasphemed by wicked men; his holy Church calumniated; his sacraments despised and trodden under foot. Then there arises before him the dark, dreary world of heathenism. Entire generations are swept from the earth before they hear his name; or, worse than all, whole nations are to hear it, only to curse the day when Christian men came to their shores to teach them vices they never knew before.

And it is for such a world as this that he is to die? An unutterable repugnance rises within his heart as again there comes before his soul the thought of man's ingratitude, and how many would be lost in spite of all his sufferings. He looks for those who should stand foremost with him in the battle, and there opens, in the dark valley before him, the yawning gulf of hell, where he beholds some of his own chosen ones struggling in the grasp of demons—ghastly shapes with a priestly character! There, amid the devouring flames, are some of his very spouses, whom he had loved with more than a bridegroom's love! No wonder that the soul of Jesus is "sad unto death." No wonder that his soul is bowed down with despondency

and repugnance; no wonder that the piercing cry is wrung from his heart: "O Father! if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me! But, Father, not my will, but thine, be done!"

Amidst the conflict between the inferior portion, which shrunk from the dreadful death awaiting him, and the superior part, which desired it for the reparation of God's glory and honor, an angel came from heaven to encourage the agonized Redeemer, representing to him with profound respect the glory which would redound to his Father, and the blessings which would accrue to men from his all-saving sacrifice on the cross. And then Jesus, passing once again in review each separate torment that awaited him, accepted them all with most profound and reverential submission to the will of his Almighty Father, saying: "Yes, Father, I consent to be seized and bound as a malefactor, struck, scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified, since so it has seemed good in thy sight." So ardent and so impetuous was the love which accompanied this act of acceptance, that it reacted physically on his frame. The blood which terror had congealed around his heart rushed through his veins, and forced its way through the pores of his sacred flesh, pouring itself out freely, even before the barbarous executioners had bidden it to flow.

#### **4. What did Judas do meanwhile?**

*He came with armed men, who bound Jesus, and led him to Caiphas, the high-priest, and from him to Pilate.*

The struggle and bloody sweat being over, our Lord rose from prayer and came to his disciples, now for the third time, and, finding them asleep, awoke them, saying: "The hour has come. Behold, the Son of man shall be

betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold, he that will betray me is at hand."

As he said these words, a band of soldiers appeared, led by the chief priests and Pharisees, and entered the garden with lanterns, clubs, and swords. Judas Iscariot was seen walking at their head. It was a place very well known to the traitor, for he had frequently accompanied his Master thither, when he went to pray. The soldiers did not know Jesus, and might easily have mistaken another for him, if the wretched Judas had not agreed beforehand with the band to give them a sign by which they might know which was Jesus. The signal he agreed upon was a kiss: "Whomsoever," said he, "I shall kiss, that is he: hold him fast." Accordingly, the traitor, when entering the garden, went straight up to Jesus, and, adding deceit and treachery to his already dreadful sin, said, "Hail, Rabbi," or master, and then kissed him. Friend, said our blessed Lord to him, for what art thou come? "Is it thus that thou betrayest the Son of man with a kiss?" Then the soldiers, who had witnessed or heard of Christ's miracles, thinking him a magician, feared lest he should escape from their hands; therefore, they bound strongly his sides, arms, and neck with two long ropes and a heavy chain, which had been used to open and close the prison-gate. At the end of this chain were manacles, wherewith they fastened his hands behind.

After binding him thus cruelly, they set out from Mount Olivet with great noise and tumult, some dragging him forward, others backward, so that he was cast violently to the ground. They vented their rage by inflicting blows on his face, head and body. They tore his garments, plucked his beard, dragged him by the hair, and forced the



points of their sticks into his sides, struck him on his shoulders, and dragged him from one side of the street to the other. The Lord fell many times, striking his face against the ground with great pain, having his hands chained behind his back, his divine face becoming covered with wounds.

Thus they arrived in the city, uttering cries and execrations, as if they had arrested the chief of malefactors. The people rushed to the windows and doors with lights; they loaded our blessed Lord with insults, injuries, and opprobrium, calling him a false prophet, a deceiver, a wicked man, a robber, and a perverter of the people. They conducted him to the tribunal of Annas. It was there that Jesus received on his virginal face that cruel blow from the ungrateful, barbarous hand of the servant whose ear he had miraculously restored in the garden of Gethsemani. So cruel was this blow that it broke all his teeth, and caused the blood to flow profusely from his eyes, nose, and mouth.

Some time after midnight it was decided by the council that, while they would retire to rest, Jesus should be thrown, bound as he was, into a dungeon, used for great robbers and murderers, so obscure that scarcely a ray of light could penetrate its darkness, and so loathsome as to be insupportable. Thither they dragged the Son of God by the cords and chains with which they had bound him in the garden. There they chained him in such a manner that he could neither lie nor sit. In going out, they left one of their number on guard.

After the infuriated and intoxicated rabble had taken some refreshment, being excited by the devil, they hastened to the prison, where they unbound Jesus from the rock

to which he was fastened, and placed him in the middle of the apartment. They would fain have forced him to speak and work some miracles ; but the Incarnate Wisdom answered them not. They renewed their insults and outrages, and blindfolded him with filthy rags. Striking him violently on the neck and face, they cried out in derision : " Prophecy who it is that struck thee."

At dawn of day, the priests and scribes assembled together, and the divine Lamb was again led before them. It was a sight most worthy of compassion, to behold that innocent Victim, with his face all bruised, disfigured, and defiled, without a merciful hand to wipe it, for his own were bound. Seeing him in such a deplorable condition, even his enemies were startled. They again designedly asked him whether he were the Son of God, and on his replying that he was, they cried out that he was worthy of death, and sent him to Pilate, the Roman Proconsul—for whom all capital cases were reserved.

### **5. How was Jesus treated by Pilate ?**

*Pilate had him scourged, suffered him to be crowned with thorns, and at last he condemned him to die upon the cross.*

When the Jews arrived at the house of Pilate, he, although a pagan, had regard to the ceremonial law, which forbade them to enter the prætorium : therefore he came out to interrogate the pretended criminal.

Finding that Jesus had been born in the jurisdiction of Herod, he sent him to Herod. It is impossible to relate all that Jesus had to undergo from his enemies in this journey from Pilate to Herod, for they were continually excited by Lucifer to further outrages, in the hope that

they might be able to learn if he were truly the Messiah. Herod had our Lord clothed in the robe of mockery, and then reconducted to Pilate. In this painful journey it happened many times that, by the pressure of the crowd, and the violence of those who dragged him, Jesus was thrown upon the ground. His veins were opened by the fall and by the blows he received, for he could not rise, because his hands were chained behind.

He was taken back to Pilate, who, seeing his innocence and the envy and hatred of the Jews, tried to deliver him. But finding that all his endeavors failed, he thought to have him scourged, in the hope that the Jews might think such punishment sufficient, and allow him to go free.

For the scourging they chose six young men, remarkable for their strength and barbarous cruelty. They led Jesus into the court, where there was a pillar, and removed the handcuffs, chains, and cords. They tore off his garments, leaving him almost entirely naked.

So tightly was he bound to the pillar, that the cords entered into the flesh, and his divine hands became much swollen. Afterwards they began to scourge him, two at a time, with a cruelty of which mere human ferocity was not capable, but Lucifer had entered into the hearts of the executioners. The first two scourged the innocent Jesus with large twisted cords, exerting their utmost violence and greatest fury upon him. The first blow that fell upon his delicate body inflicted large livid bruises, which swelled to a frightful extent, and seemed as if the blood was about to burst from them.

When these cruel men were exhausted from fatigue, they were succeeded by the second two, who, using heavy leather thongs, broke the flesh of the bruises inflicted by

the first; so that the precious blood not only covered the body of Jesus, but also saturated the garments of the sacrilegious murderers, and fell upon the ground.

When exhausted, they were succeeded by a third party, who used as their instruments of torture the sinews of beasts, which were very hard and dry, resembling dried twigs. Their blows being repeated over the wounds inflicted by the first and second executioners, caused Jesus the most intense agony. But as his body was become one entire wound, they could no longer inflict new wounds; their blows therefore, falling on his sacred flesh, tore out pieces, which fell to the ground, and in many places left the bones exposed to sight. Not content with this, they satiated their cruelty by striking him on the face, hands, and feet, and sparing no part of his body. So bruised, torn, and disfigured was the countenance of the Lord, as to be no longer recognizable.

But anxious to see him die on the cross, the Jews unbound Jesus from the pillar, and he sank to the ground bathed in his blood. They ordered him to put on his garments, but one of the wicked wretches had hidden his seamless robe; therefore, while he remained there naked, they reviled and mocked him. Some of them, going to Pilate, said that, as Jesus pretended to be the King of the Jews, it would be but just to crown him with thorns. Having obtained his permission, they took Jesus, threw over his shoulders an old purple cloak, placed in his hand a reed for a sceptre, and violently pressed on his divine head the crown of thorns.

This crown was made of very long and sharp thorns, which being pressed on, many penetrated the bones of the head, others came out at his ears and eyes.



After this ignominious and cruel ceremony they adored as mock king him, who, by nature and every title, was the King of kings, the Lord of lords. The soldiers set him in their midst, and in presence of the priests and Pharisees loaded him with injuries and blasphemies, while some, bending the knee before him, cried out in mockery : "Hail, King of the Jews." Others struck him violently on the face ; others, taking the reed, struck him on the head ; others, again, defiled his countenance with spittle, while all conspired to load him with injuries and blasphemies.

When sentence of death had been pronounced against Jesus of Nazareth, the soldiers drew him aside, tore off the robe of mockery, and vested him in his own tunic, that he might be the better known, and on his head they again pressed the thorny crown. The city was thronged with strangers who had come to celebrate the Pasch, and the streets leading to Pilate's house were filled, as all desired to know what was transpiring.

When Jesus was dragged into the midst of the crowd, a confused murmur arose amongst them, but nothing could be plainly heard save the insolent expressions of joy and blasphemy of the priests and Pharisees.

In presence of an immense crowd the executioners presented the cross to Jesus, and laid it on his shoulders, all torn and covered with wounds ; and that he might be able to carry it, they untied his hands, but did not remove the other bonds. They put a chain around his neck, and bound his body with long cords ; with one they dragged him forward, with another backward. The cross was of very heavy wood and fifteen feet in length.

The herald advanced first with sound of trumpet to publish the sentence ; then followed the noisy and clamorous

multitude, the executioners and soldiers uttering raileries, taunts, laughter, and cries of opprobrium; and thus in tumultuous disorder they traversed the streets of Jerusalem, from the palace of Pilate to the place of execution.

Our Lord continued his sorrowful way amid a thousand injuries. Many times he fell to the earth, because they dragged him this way and that, and because he was loaded with the heavy weight of the cross. In those falls he received new and numerous wounds, which caused him great pain, particularly those in his knees; and the load of the cross made a deep wound on his shoulders. By dragging him violently, they frequently struck his head against the cross, and each blow forced the thorns deeper in, causing him intenser suffering still.

The soldiers, seeing Jesus so weak and faint, and fearing that he would die on the way to the place of execution, forced Simon of Cyrene to come to his aid; and at length the new Isaac arrived at the mount of sacrifice, spent with fatigue, faint from pain, and covered with blood.

All the sorrows of the Redeemer were renewed when his seamless robe, which clung to all his wounds, was violently torn from his body. They dragged it over his head, without removing the crown of thorns, and by this violence pulled it off with his garment, thus renewing all the wounds of his sacred head. Then they again fastened and pressed on the crown of thorns.

While the executioners were preparing to crucify him, he prayed to the eternal Father for the whole race of men, and for those about to crucify him. They threw him violently down upon the cross, while he, raising his eyes to heaven, extended his arms and placed his right hand upon the hole. He offered himself anew to the eternal

Father, and then they fastened his all-powerful hand with a large pointed nail, which burst the veins and tore the sinews. The left hand could not reach the second hole on account of the contraction of the sinews, and also because they had purposely made the hole at too great a distance. Therefore they took the chain which had been fastened around his neck, and, fastening it to the manacle of his wrist, stretched the arm and nailed it. The blood burst forth and flowed abundantly, causing incredible suffering to our Lord.

Attaching the chain to his feet, they bound them together, one upon the other, and, dragging them with great violence, nailed them with a third nail, larger and stronger than the other two. The sacred body was thus nailed on the cross, but in such a state that all the bones might be counted, for they were entirely dislocated and dragged out of place. Those of the breast, shoulders, and limbs, were entirely disjointed by the cruel violence of the executioners.

After having nailed our Lord to the cross, those monsters of cruelty began to fear that the nails would be loosened and the body fall to the ground; therefore they determined to prevent it. Raising the cross, they turned it over in such a manner that our Saviour lay upon his face on the ground, and, whilst he was in this position, they clinched the nails. At the sight of this new excess of barbarity the beholders shuddered, and many of the crowd, being excited, raised a tumult.

After the nails had been clinched, they raised the cross, and let it fall into the hole in which it was to stand. Then those cruel wretches supported the body with their lances, making deep wounds under the arms, and thrusting the

points into the flesh, whilst the others planted the cross. At this painful sight the cries of the people were redoubled, and a still greater tumult was raised. The Jews blasphemed him, the devout compassionated him, and strangers were overwhelmed with astonishment. Many dared not look at him for the horror that they felt. The sacred blood was gushing forth from the new wounds, and from those that were reopened.

The priests and Pharisees wagged their heads in mockery, and throwing dirt and stones at him, cried out: "Thou who canst destroy the temple of God and in three days rebuild it, save thyself." The thieves also insulted him, saying: "If thou art the Son of God, save thyself and us."

#### **6. What do we call the day on which Christ was crucified?**

*Good-Friday, which is the Friday in Holy Week.*

The day on which Jesus Christ offered up his life for us on the cross is called Good-Friday, because it is the most illustrious, the most glorious, and the best of all Fridays, as on that day he showed the excess of his love for us; for, by his sufferings and death, he rescued us from the tyranny of hell, stripped death of its terrors, destroyed the empire of sin, blotted out the curse that had been pronounced against us, reëstablished us in all our rights to heaven, and *purchased for us* every blessing—every favor that might lead us to his glorious kingdom. It is, too, called *good*, on account of the holiness of the mysteries which are celebrated on that day. All the ceremonies, all the offices of Good-Friday, point out the sadness and fear which should fill every Christian soul at the remembrance of the dreadful torments which the Son



of God endured for us. On that day, the Church puts on her mourning; no joyous tones are heard, but sad, plaintive strains, melting the heart with compunction and sorrow. No bell rings—not even is the holy sacrifice celebrated on that day; for the Church lays aside everything, except what may lead us to sympathize with Jesus, and excite in us grief and regret for our sins, which nailed him to the cross.

### **7. Where did Christ suffer and die?**

*Christ suffered and died on Mount Calvary, near Jerusalem.*

Our blessed Lord suffered and died upon Mount Calvary. This was the public place of execution for criminals, situated outside of the city of Jerusalem. The word Calvary means a place of skulls. It was so called, no doubt, from the number of human skulls which were found in the ground; for the criminals were commonly buried close by the spot where they had been executed.

### **8. How old was Christ when he died?**

*Thirty-three years and a half.*

Jesus, being ready to give up his spirit, reflects on all the labors, humiliations, opprobriums, and torments which divine justice had ordained him to suffer in expiation of our crimes; and commencing from the moment of his entrance into the world, until this, in which he is going forth from it, he finds that the work of redemption is consummated. He reflects on the work his Father had given him. He considers all the actions of his life, with all the charges that had been committed to him. He looks upon those of Mediator, Redeemer, Doctor, Legislator, Sovereign, Pontiff, Guide to eternity, and finds that all is

consummated. He has preached the Gospel, and traced a model of every virtue. All is consummated.

He reflects on all the benefits he desired to confer on mankind in the course of his life, and finds he has spared nothing in his favor. "It is consummated." His blood, his strength, his merits, are exhausted; he has not reserved a single moment of his life which he has not given us. Already a mortal paleness overspreads his countenance, his body grows cold, his eyes close, his lips fade; yet one sigh, and his soul goes forth and descends into limbo. He languishes, he dies, in the thirty-fourth year of his mortal life: all is consummated. Jesus Christ, then, after his crucifixion, was really "dead and buried." It is not without reason that this is proposed as a separate and distinct object of belief: there were some who denied his death upon the cross. The apostles, therefore, were justly of opinion that to such an error should be opposed the doctrine of faith contained in this article of the Creed, the truth of which is placed beyond the possibility of doubt by the unanimous testimony of all the Evangelists, who record that Jesus "yielded up the ghost." (Matt. xxvii, 50; Mark xv, 37; Luke xxiii, 46; John xix, 30.) As Christ was a perfect man, he, of course, was also capable of dying; and death took place by the separation of the soul from the body. When, therefore, we say that Jesus died, we mean that his soul was separated from his body.

### **9. What happened at his death?**

*The sun was darkened, the earth shook, and many of the dead rose to life.*

When Jesus Christ expired on the cross, three most wonderful events took place. The first was the *darkness*

*of the sun.* The sky became obscured, for the sun withdrew its light, and soon darkness spread over the face of the earth. The darkness of the sun on the death of Christ was clearly the effect of a miracle, for an eclipse could not have taken place at that time, as the moon was in *opposition*, or full; and no great knowledge of astronomy is required to show that, when the moon is full, there can be no eclipse of the sun. Again, St. Luke tells us that there was "darkness over all the face of the earth," from the sixth to the ninth hour, that is, during three hours; but it is well known that a total eclipse of the sun does not continue more than five minutes.

The darkness of the sun at the death of Christ is attested by many learned writers. St. Denis the Areopagite, who was studying philosophy at Heliopolis in Egypt, alarmed at the darkness, cried out to his preceptor, Apollophanes: "Either the world is about to be destroyed, or the God of nature suffers." Tertullian, in his *Apology*, refers the pagans to their own annals, in which they would find recorded the extraordinary darkness that covered the face of the earth, when Jesus Christ expired on the cross. Phlegon, in his *Account of the Olympiads*, makes mention of the same supernatural occurrence; and in the Chinese annals, too, this remarkable event is recorded. These writers, and many others, leave no room to doubt of a total darkness having taken place in the year of Christ's death; and as there could not be, by any possibility, an eclipse of the sun in that year, the darkness of which they speak can be no other than that mentioned by the Evangelists.

The second extraordinary event that took place, was the *trembling of the earth*. When Jesus died, the earth tottered to its very foundations; the rocks were split

asunder, as if sympathizing with the agony of Jesus, and the veil of the temple was rent. That split is still to be seen, and the sight of it alone has sufficed to convert unbelievers. A learned English traveller relates an adventure of this kind which occurred to one of his countrymen. He was one of those professed free-thinkers, who only admit as true what they see themselves, would have others believe them on their word, but yet refuse to believe any one. Travelling in Palestine with a mind full of prejudice, he made a jest of everything he saw, and laughed immoderately at stories he heard of relics and miracles. He was told of the fissures in the rock of Calvary, and must needs see them, promising himself additional themes for the exercise of his wit and pleasantry. But when he had regarded for some moments those enormous fissures; when he saw that, instead of following the natural division of soils, as is usual in other convulsions of the earth, they followed, on the contrary, the most oblique directions: when he had considered all that, he was staggered, he began to believe in religion, and even cried aloud in his conviction, "*I begin to be a Christian!*" I have made a profound study of mathematics and physics, and I am satisfied that the rents I now see were not produced by an ordinary or natural earthquake. I see, on the contrary, that they are the pure effort of a miracle; and I thank my God for having brought me hither to contemplate this monument of his power, which proves in so striking a manner the Divinity of Jesus Christ." (Mgr. Mislin, *Les Saints Lieux*, II, 265.)

The third miracle that took place after Christ had expired on the cross, was the opening of the tombs, and the resurrection of many persons who had been dead. "The tombs," says the Gospel, "were opened, and many bodies



of the saints, that had slept, arose, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, came into the holy city and appeared to many." (Matt. xxvii, 52, 53.) The dead that arose came into the holy city, that is, Jerusalem; they appeared to many, and attested the resurrection of our Saviour, then quitted the world, and, without again dying, ascended into heaven, both body and soul, on the day of Christ's ascension. This is the opinion of a great many writers on the Gospel.

When the centurion and the soldiers who presided over the execution witnessed those marvels, they departed groaning and contrite, and exclaiming: "He (Christ) was truly the Son of God!"

#### **10. Was Jesus Christ forced to suffer death?**

*No one could force him to suffer and to die; he suffered and died of his own free will.*

No sooner was the soul of Jesus Christ created, than it was united to his little body in the womb of Mary; in the same instant it was also hypostatically united to the Divine Word, and so enlightened thereby with the light of glory, so overwhelmed with reverence, so inflamed with love, at the first view of the Divine Essence imparted to it at its creation, that it then offered itself to do and to suffer all that was necessary for the glory of the Godhead, and for the expiation of the sins of men. He knew that all the sacrifices of goats and bulls, offered to God in times past, had not been able to satisfy for the sins of men; he knew that all these sacrifices were less than nothing before that great Being, who could be worthily honored only by the homage of a God, and adequately worshipped only by the sacrifice of the life of God. Then it was, as St. Paul

assures us, that our blessed Redeemer exclaimed: "Father, sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me. Then said I, Behold I come to do thy will." (Heb. x, 5.) "My Father," said Jesus, "all the victims hitherto offered to thee have not sufficed, nor could they suffice, to satisfy thy justice; but thou hast given me this passible body, in order that, by shedding my blood, I might appease thee and save men. Behold, I come; here I am ready, I accept every thing, I submit myself absolutely to thy will."

The eternal Father then intimated to his Son that he wished him to die for the redemption of the world. At that same moment he presented to the view of his Son the entire tableau, so to speak, of the sufferings he would have to endure, even unto death, in order to redeem mankind. He brought before him the scourges, and Jesus presented to them his flesh; he brought before him the thorns, and Jesus presented to them his head. He brought before him the blows, and Jesus presented to them his cheeks; he brought before him the nails, and Jesus presented to them his hands and his feet; he brought before him the cross, and Jesus offered his life; he brought before him all the labors, contempt and poverty that were to be his portion through life, in Bethlehem, as well as in Egypt and Nazareth; all the sufferings and ignominy of his passion, all the weariness, the sadness, the agonies, and the abandonment in which he was to end his life upon Calvary,—and Jesus embraced them all. Thus is it true that, even from his earliest infancy, our blessed Redeemer, every moment of his life, suffered a continued martyrdom, which was as continual a sacrifice offered by him for us to his eternal Father.

Our Redeemer offered himself voluntarily to his Father to satisfy for our sins : "He was offered, because it was his own will." (Isa. i, 7.) And his Father loaded him with all crimes : "He has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. liii, 6.) And thus behold the Divine Word, innocent, most pure and holy,—behold him, even from his infancy, charged with all the blasphemies, the sacrileges, and the crimes of men, because he had bound himself to satisfy the divine justice. So that Jesus charged himself with as many evils as there have ever been, or ever shall be, mortal sins committed by all mankind.

Again, in the garden of Gethsemani, we behold our Lord voluntarily abandoning his sacred soul to the terrible impressions of excessive terror and oppressive sadness, and in his overwhelming anguish having recourse to prayer as his only refuge. We behold him there prostrate on the earth, whence, with profound respect and perfect resignation, he sends up to heaven the piteous cry : "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." It is thus that he expresses his voluntary acceptance of death. He had, no doubt, consented, at the first moment of his incarnation, to die for us, but it pleased him to ratify that consent in the solitude of the Garden of Olives.

It was the special privilege of our divine Saviour to die when he himself decreed to die, and to die, not by external violence, but of his own free will ; and not only his death, but also its time and place were ordained by him, as we learn from these words of Isaias : "He was offered, because it was his own will." (Isa. liii, 7.) Our Blessed Redeemer, before his passion, declared the same of himself : "I lay down my life," says he, "that I may take it again. No

man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself; and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John x, 17, 18.) As to the time and place, when Herod insidiously sought the life of the Saviour, he said: "Go and tell that fox: Behold I cast out devils, and perform cures this day and to-morrow, and the third day I am consummated. But yet I must walk this day, and to-morrow, and the day following, because it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." (Luke xiii, 32, 33.) Christ, therefore, offered himself, not involuntarily or by external force, but of his own free will. Going to meet his enemies, he said, "I am he" (John xviii, 5); and all the punishments which injustice and cruelty inflicted on him he endured voluntarily.

### **11. For whom did Jesus Christ suffer and die?**

*Christ suffered and died for all men, to save them.*

Almighty God created all men out of love; and out of love, he has also sent his beloved Son to become man, and to redeem all men by his sufferings and death. The bitter passion, the crucifixion of Jesus, is especially a proof of the real, hearty desire of the Creator to save his creatures. It is more; it is an earnest desire to make them forever happy. It is through the bleeding wound in his heart that Jesus now speaks to us. "Ah!" he says, "I might have passed my life on earth in the midst of ever-varying pleasures; I might have assumed a body bright and glorious, and incapable of suffering. But, for love of men, I chose one keenly alive to every pain, and my heart bore every woe that the human heart can ever bear. If men are lost, it is no fault of mine; I did my best to save them all. What more could I have done for them than I



have done ?” Did not faith assure us of it, who could ever believe that a God, out of love for such a worm as man is, should himself become a worm like him, and die for him to save his life ? A devout author says : “ Suppose by chance, that, passing on your way, you should have crushed to death a worm in your path, and then some one, observing your compassion for the poor worm, should say to you : ‘ Well, now, if you would restore that dead worm to life, you must first yourself become a worm like it, and then must shed all your blood and make a bath of it in which to wash the worm, and so it shall revive,’—what would you reply ? Certainly, you would say : ‘ And what matters it to me whether the worm be alive or dead, if I should have to purchase its life by my own death ?’ And much more would you say so if it was not an inoffensive worm, but an ungrateful asp, which, in return for all your benefits, had made an attempt upon your life. But, even should your love for that asp reach so far as to induce you to suffer death in order to restore it to life, what would men say then ? And what would not that serpent do for you, whose death had saved it, supposing it were capable of reason ? But this much has Jesus Christ done for you, most vile worm ; and you, with the blackest ingratitude, have tried oftentimes to take away his life ; and your sins would have done so, were Jesus liable to die any more. How much viler are you in the sight of God than a worm is in your own sight ! What difference would it make to God had you remained dead and forever reprobate in your sins, as you well deserve ? Nevertheless, this God had such a love for you that, to release you from eternal death, he first became a worm like you, and then, to save you, would lavish upon you his heart’s blood, even to the last

drop, and endure the death which you had justly deserved." "Christ gave himself a redemption for all." (1 Tim. ii, 6.)

**12. If Christ died for the salvation of all men, why are not all saved?**

*Because not all believe his doctrine, keep his commandments, and use the means of grace which he gives them.*

It is true that, by the bloody sacrifice of himself upon the cross, our blessed Redeemer fully atoned for all the sins of men, past, present and to come.

It is true that the price he paid on the cross for our salvation is of infinite value, and that nothing can be added to that value. It is true, also, that, only through his merits, does the way of pardon lie open to us; and that all the graces we have or can have, are due to that precious blood-shedding. But the question is, How are these merits of our Saviour to be applied to our souls, so that we may profit by them? The mere fact of his death does not save all, otherwise all men would be saved, no matter who they are, or how they live, or how they die.

We believe that the merits of Jesus Christ must be imparted to us, so that they may be a healing and health-giving medicine to our souls. They must be applied to the soul, so as really to cleanse and transform her into a true copy of Christ crucified.

To illustrate our point:—In a city there is a large reservoir always filled with pure, fresh water, which is a great blessing to the inhabitants. The quantity of water is more than sufficient to supply the wants of every one. But for one who is in great need of water, what does it avail to know that an immense reservoir is there, if he cannot get at it? If a person wishes to get water, he

must either go to the reservoir, or the water must be conveyed thence to him by some means.

It is just so with the graces of redemption, which our blessed Saviour merited for us by his death. They form an infinite, an inexhaustible fountain open to all. But the pure water of this fountain must be applied to our souls, else we shall perish. And for this reason our Lord Jesus Christ not only *merited* these graces for us, but established also certain conditions and channels whereby these graces are communicated to the souls of men. The conditions are, that we firmly believe his doctrine, and keep his commandments; and the channels are the sacraments and the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Now, it is a well-known fact that thousands of men have renounced Christ's doctrine, and despise the means of grace, the holy sacraments; they openly profess infidelity and indifferentism towards God and his holy religion. It is also a well-known fact that there are thousands of Catholics who neglect their religious duties, and live continually in mortal sin. No wonder, therefore, that so many men are lost,—lost through their own fault. They choose to be lost in spite of all God's efforts to save them.

### **13. For what intention did Jesus offer up his life for us?**

*Christ offered up his life : 1, to honor the supreme majesty of God ; 2, to satisfy the divine justice for our sins ; 3, to thank God for his blessings ; and, 4, to merit for us abundant graces.*

We have a fourfold duty to fulfil towards the Almighty. It is our duty to honor and praise God in a manner worthy of him; to thank him for the innumerable benefits which he has conferred upon us, in a manner worthy of the giver

and the greatness of the gifts ; to expiate the sins which we have committed ; finally, to secure for ourselves and others all the blessings needed for soul and body. Now, Jesus Christ knew that men, being sinners and enemies of his heavenly Father, were not able to discharge this fourfold duty towards him. So he came and fulfilled this duty for us. While hanging on the cross on Good-Friday, he performed every act of worship of which the human soul is capable ; that is, he honored and praised his heavenly Father for us, he gave thanks to him for us, he atoned for our sins, and prayed for us : in a word, he offered up his life as a sacrifice whereby to honor his Father for us, to propitiate him for the sins of all men, to thank him, and obtain for us all possible blessings, spiritual and temporal. His acts of honor and praise, of atonement, of thanksgiving, and his prayers, are all ours, and, by means of them, we discharge our fourfold duty towards God in a manner worthy of his divine Majesty. It is done in the following manner :—I acknowledge thee, O my God ! for my Sovereign Lord and the Supreme Disposer of my life and death ; and because I am not able worthily to honor thy greatness, I beg of thee to accept, as if it were my own, all the submission with which thy Son honored thee on the cross. I intend, moreover, by this divine Victim, to propitiate thee for my sins, to lay my wants open to thee, through the pleading tongue of Jesus ; and to thank thee, as becomes me and as is worthy of thee, for all the blessings thou hast bestowed upon me and upon the whole world.



**14. Did Christ suffer as God or as man ?**

*Christ suffered as man : as God, he could neither suffer nor die.*

We have seen that in Christ there is but one person ; but this person is God and man at the same time. As God, this person is equal to God the Father, and cannot, in the least, experience any human miseries. But as man, he is like us in all things except sin. Hence it is that in the garden of Gethsemani we behold him abandoning his soul to the impressions of excessive sadness, and having recourse to prayer as his only refuge in his overwhelming anguish. We behold him there prostrate on the earth, whence, with profound respect and perfect resignation, he sends up to heaven the piteous cry : “My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matt. xxvi, 39.) Representing to himself his approaching death, with all its accompanying circumstances of horror, he permitted the inferior portion of his human nature to oppose the noble sacrifice, and to supplicate the eternal Father that the chalice might, if possible, pass away untasted ; the superior part immediately manifesting its unshaken conformity to the divine decree by adding : “Yet not my will, but thine, be done.”

**15. Can we not say in truth that God prayed, fasted, suffered, and died for us ?**

*We can ; because whatever Jesus Christ did for us is the work of his person, who is God.*

As Christ is but one person,—the second person of the Blessed Trinity,—everything he did is attributed to his person, who is God. Hence it is right to say : God was

born of the Blessed Virgin, laid in a manger, shivered with cold, fled into Egypt, slept, ate, suffered from hunger, shed bitter tears, was taken prisoner, blindfolded, buffeted, scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, and died for us.

**16. Of what value, then, before God, is all that Jesus Christ has done for us?**

*Jesus Christ being a divine person, all his actions and sufferings are of infinite value.*

Any act of honor and praise, of atonement and thanksgiving, any kind of prayer, coming from a finite creature, necessarily partakes of the imperfection of its origin; it is essentially limited. Presented to the Almighty, it may serve in some sense to beautify and adorn the creature that presents it; but it cannot reflect any real glory on him who dwelleth in light inaccessible. Creatures may shine with a borrowed splendor—they may, like the stars of night, receive a foreign, an extraneous brightness; but, as Christ is an infinite person, all his actions partook of the infinite perfection of the person. Being God, he could truly honor and praise God in an infinite manner; he could render him infinite thanks; he could render an infinite satisfaction for the sins of all men: all he did was of an infinite merit and value. Hence it was that, after Judas had left the supper-room to betray our Lord, Jesus Christ said: “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” (John xiii, 31.) “Father, the hour is come, that thy Son may glorify thee.” (Ibid. xvii, 4.) The greater the dignity and rank of a person, the greater also is the honor which he pays to another. This honor is so much the more acceptable, the more it proceeds from the

heart. No one can show his veneration and esteem for his sovereign, or his desire of seeing him honored, better than by sacrificing his very life in honor of, and out of love for, the potentate. As, then, the dignity of Jesus Christ is infinite, so was the honor which he paid to his Father by every act of his life, especially by his death upon the cross; whilst the dishonor offered to his Father by all the sins of men that ever were or will be, can never reach the infinite. He rendered this honor with an infinite love to his Father, and therefore it was most acceptable to him—ininitely more pleasing than the dishonor caused by the sins of men could be displeasing. For this reason was it that the angels sang at the birth of our Lord: “Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.” (Luke ii, 14.)

And indeed, though loud is the voice of nature in the praise of its author, harmonious the songs of thanksgiving which the universe pours forth to its Creator, incessant the homage which the celestial choirs render to their eternal King,—all dwindles and totally disappears when compared with that honor, homage, and glory which Jesus Christ gave to his Father during his life on earth.

### **17. What follows from this answer?**

*It follows that in Christ there is plentiful redemption, and no one need despair of salvation.*

Faith teaches us, and reason itself seems sufficient to evince, that, coming from a God, the slightest atonement would have been enough; that, in a being of his infinite dignity, the very first drop of his inestimable blood would have sufficed, nay, would have blotted out the sins of a thousand worlds ten times more wicked than our own.

Yet for us alone he prodigally shed it all ; he would observe no medium in his love, nor rest satisfied till he had selected and exhausted in his own person every refinement of suffering that the ingenuity of the most cruel of mankind could devise. The effusion of his blood is the price of our Redemption. It is thus that his Father pardoned us.

Pardoned us ! Oh ! look upon the cross and behold the manner in which he has pardoned us ! Who would have thought it ? Had he but pardoned us, that alone would have been astonishing. Had he commissioned another to atone for our sins, it would still have been infinite mercy. But that he should think of this,—that he, the Omnipotent, the Eternal, the Essential of all beings, should think of atoning for us himself ; that he should leave his celestial throne, invest himself with our wretched clay, and hang for us upon the infamous gibbet of the cross,—this surpasses all comprehension ; it leaves us at once speechless and prostrate. Here we cannot understand : we can only be silent and adore.

### 18. What do we owe to Jesus Christ ?

*We must, 1, worship him as our God ; 2, place confidence in him as our Redeemer and only mediator of justice with God ; 3, love him as our greatest benefactor.*

1. We must worship Jesus Christ as our God. Now, to worship Christ is to honor and praise him as the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. The God who created us,—that God on whom we depend for every moment of our existence,—is a God of infinite majesty and glory ; and Jesus Christ is that God.

Look around upon the heavens and the earth—how sublime an idea do they convey of their Almighty Architect !



What a stupendous mass is the ponderous globe upon which we stand ! yet Christ, the son of God, by whom all things were made, poises it with one finger ! How vast the abyss of its waters ! yet he measures it, as the Scripture says, in the palm of his hand. How awful is the roar of the thunder ! it is but the feeble echo of his voice. How terrific the glare of the lightning ! it is only a faint scintillation of his brightness. All that we see around us—the vast luminaries that roll above us, the earth which we inhabit, with its endless diversity of animals and productions, with man, the lord and master of the whole, once were not. The Almighty spoke one word, and instantly we leaped into being, and we are ! How the soul and all her faculties sink into insignificance before this idea of her Creator, God ! How she longs to honor and glorify him who is the centre of glory, towards whom tend all the works of the Creator ! Yes, glory and honor essentially appertain to God. All that is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, according to St. John, sing in concert the praises of God, in three persons : “ And every creature which is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,—I heard all saying : To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction and honor, and glory and power, for ever and ever.” (Apoc. v, 13.)

The eternal occupation of the blessed is to chant the sacred canticle, “ Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts.” (Isa. vi, 3.) Their allelujas, their hymns of gladness, are ascending before the throne of God for ever and ever. In purgatory, especially, are exemplified their profound esteem and homage to Almighty God, by the intense desire of the sufferers to enjoy him. Even hell itself glorifies the Lord, for the reprobate are constrained

to glorify the justice of God by the torments which they endure in punishment for their sins. But, amongst all creatures, man is under special obligations to glorify and honor Almighty God. Man is the masterpiece of creation, a resplendent image of the divine persons. God has redeemed man preferably to the angels. In baptism he is consecrated to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, by an indelible character impressed on his soul. Man, therefore, is under the strictest obligation to honor and praise and glorify Jesus Christ as his Lord and God, in the best manner possible. To comply with this obligation as far as possible, many holy kings, emperors and lords had churches and monasteries erected where our Lord Jesus Christ might be honored and praised day and night.

2. We must place confidence in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and only mediator of justice with God. The principal object of Christian hope is the everlasting enjoyment of God. The virtue of hope inclines our will to expect with firm confidence that God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, will supply all our wants here below, and grant us eternal happiness hereafter, if our life is in conformity to the doctrine of the holy Roman Catholic Church. Hope is given us as a domestic consolation in all our adversities. The poor, the miserable, the unhappy, are sustained under their miseries by the sweet hope of a happy eternity. What renders hell the most intolerable of all evils is that hope is banished from it, and will never enter it.

But, according to the Apostle St. Paul, our hope of salvation must be firm and immovable. Now, as has already been remarked, the least act of obedience, one little drop of the blood of Jesus Christ, is more than sufficient

to atone for the sins of the whole world, and to obtain for us everlasting happiness, and to render our hope of heaven most firm and immovable. It was to strengthen us in our hope of salvation that our dear Saviour underwent so many sufferings, and shed the last drop of his sacred blood. "Remember," says he to every one, "that it was for the consolation and salvation of sinners that I have been pleased to be bound in swaddling-clothes, that they might be released from the chains of hell; that I have become poor, in order that they might be made partakers of my riches; that I have made myself weak, to give them power over their enemies; that I have chosen to weep and shed my blood, in order that, by my tears and blood, their sins might be washed away."

"Let us, then," says St. Alphonsus, "not be afraid of Jesus Christ, but of our own obstinacy, if, after offending him, we will not listen to his voice, inviting us to be reconciled. "Who is he that shall condemn?" says the apostle: "Christ Jesus that died; who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii, 34.) If we persist in our obstinacy, Jesus Christ will be constrained to condemn us; but if we repent of the evil we have done, what fear need we have of Jesus Christ, who has to pronounce on us sentence? "Think," says St. Paul, "that the self-same Redeemer has to sentence thee who died for thee, and still descends from heaven every day, and dies mystically in each Mass, in order that he might not condemn thee,—that self-same one, who, that he might pardon thee, has not spared himself."

Speed on, then, with gladness, O ye souls that love God and hope in God! speed on your way with gladness! What! if Adam's sin, and still more our own sins, have wrought sad ruin in us! let us understand that Jesus

Christ, by the redemption, has made superabundant reparation for them. "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound." (Rom. v, 20.) "Greater," says St. Leo, "has been the acquisition which we have made by the grace of our Redeemer, than was the loss which we had suffered by the malice of the devil." Isaias had long ago prophesied that, by means of Jesus Christ, man should receive graces from God far surpassing the chastisement merited by his sins: "He hath received of the hand of the Lord double for all his sins." (Isa. xl, 2.) God has so given remission of sins to the Church through Christ, that she has received double (that is, manifold blessings) instead of the punishments of sin which she deserved. The Lord said: "I am come, that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." (John x, 10.) I am come to give life to man, and a more abundant measure of life than what they had lost by sin. "Not as the offence, so also the gift." (Rom. v, 15.) Great had been the sin of man; but greater, says the apostle, has been the gift of redemption, which has not only just sufficed for a remedy, but superabundantly: "And with him is plentiful redemption." (Ps. cxxix, 7.) St. Anselm says that the sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ surpassed all the debts of sinners. (De Med. Red. Hom., c. 3.) For this reason the Church styles the fault of Adam a happy one: "O happy fault, which deserved to have so great a Redeemer!" It is true that sin has clouded the mind to the knowledge of eternal truths, and has introduced into the soul the concupiscence of sensible goods, forbidden by the divine command. Yes, but what helps and means has not Jesus Christ obtained for us through his merits, in order to procure us light and strength to vanquish all our enemies and to advance



in virtue? The holy sacraments, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, prayer to God through Jesus Christ at Mass,—ah! these are indeed arms and means sufficient, not only to gain the victory over all temptation and concupiscence, but even to run forward and fly in the way of perfection. It is certain that, by these very means given to us, all the saints of the New Law have become saints. Ours, then, is the fault, if we do not avail ourselves of them.

3. We must love Jesus Christ as our greatest benefactor. Love is the loadstone of love. Hence, if you wish to be loved, love. There is no more effectual means to secure to yourself the affections of another than to love him, and to make him aware that you love him. But, my Jesus, this rule holds good for others, holds good for all, but not for thee. Men are grateful to all, but not to thee. Thou art at a loss what more to do, to show men the love thou bearest them. Thou hast positively nothing left to do, to allure the affections of men. If the Son of God had engaged to rescue from death his own Father, to what lower humiliation could he stoop than to assume human flesh and lay down his life in sacrifice for his salvation? Nay, had Jesus Christ been a mere man instead of one of the divine persons, had he wished to gain, by some token of affection, the love of his God, what more could he have done for him? If a servant of ours had given out of love for us his very life-blood, would he not have riveted our heart to him, and obliged us to love him, for very gratitude at least? How comes it, then, that Jesus Christ, though he has laid down his life for us, and lays it down daily in Mass hundreds of times, has still failed to win our love? It is because we have never sufficiently reflected on the blessings of God, especially on all that Jesus Christ

has done and suffered for us. How many hearts are blest in the wounds of Jesus, which, like glowing furnaces, are so penetrated with the fire of his love that they have not refused to consecrate to him their goods, their lives, their entire selves, surmounting with a generous courage all the obstacles they met in the observance of the divine law. But where did the saints find the courage and constancy to overcome themselves, to despise the world, renounce its pleasures and amusements, and endure heroically all the troubles and trials of this life? It was in the study of Jesus Christ crucified.

It is indeed our duty to form ourselves upon the divine model which our heavenly Father has given us in his well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We can, therefore, have no better intention in all our actions than to perform them after the example shown us by our divine Saviour. But, to do this well, we must often consider them with great attention, and make our mind dwell upon them with delight; for a child who loves his father endeavors to acquire a conformity of disposition and inclinations with his, to imitate him in all his actions. Great, indeed, are the fruits, and wonderful the effects, produced in the soul by the frequent consideration of the mysteries of our Lord's life. This consideration is best calculated to produce in our hearts pious affections and fervent petitions for all the graces necessary for our salvation and sanctification, and to enable us to form firm resolutions to avoid some particular fault and to practise some particular virtue: and this leads infallibly to the reformation of life. Hence our Lord has declared, by several revelations, that no devotion is more pleasing to him than that which we have to the mysteries of his life, passion, and death.

He said to St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: "If, every Friday, you will pay attention to the hour on which I expired upon the cross, you will at once receive particular graces from my spirit, which I then returned to my eternal Father; and although you do not feel this grace, it shall always rest upon you." Our Lord said to the blessed Veronica, of the Order of St. Augustine: "I wish all men to do their utmost to sorrow in their hearts through veneration for my passion, as if compassionating me. If they shed one little tear over it, they may be sure they have done a great thing; for the tongue of man cannot tell what joy and satisfaction that one little tear causes me." To St. Bridget he said: "I counsel you to have always two thoughts in your heart. First, the remembrance of what I have done for you in suffering and dying: this thought will excite love of God. Secondly, the consideration of my justice and the future judgment: this will strike fear into your soul." When the blessed Angela Foligno asked God what she could do to please him more, he vouchsafed to appear to her several times, both sleeping and waking, always as crucified on the cross, and told her to look at his wounds, and then showed her, in a wonderful manner, how he had endured all those sufferings for her; and lastly, he said: "What, then, can you do for me which would be enough?" St. Mary Magdalen, that incomparable lover of Jesus Christ crucified, having retired into the famous solitude of St. Baume, and having begged of our Lord to make known to her in what exercise he desired she should chiefly be employed, that so she might become more agreeable to him, and thereby daily testify her love to him, our Saviour sent an angel to her with a cross in his hand, which he placed at the door of her cell, telling her that she

should ever have that cross before her eyes, and that she ought to be continually taken up with the consideration of the mysteries that were wrought upon it. She followed this advice for the space of the thirty-two years she lived afterwards. We read of St. Bridget that, when she was very young, our Saviour appeared to her nailed on the cross and quite covered with blood, which he seemed to have then newly shed; and from that time she ceased not to meditate on the passion of the Son of God, and shed many tears during her meditations. We likewise read, in the life of St. Francis, that, having three times opened the Mass-book, there to learn evangelical perfection, by a particular providence of God, he always opened it at the passion of Christ, as if God would have thereby said to him: "You seek the means of making yourself perfect. You will become perfect by giving yourself to the contemplation and imitation of my sufferings." To the same end, the cross was shown to that holy man seven times, as the pattern which he ought to follow; and, to load him with favors, our Lord appeared to him in the form of a crucified seraph, and imprinted the marks of his five wounds upon him, filling his heart at the same time with the tenderest devotion to his sufferings. It was in the sweet school of the crucifix that St. Francis became a seraph on earth. Whenever he meditated on the sufferings of Jesus Christ he wept so constantly that, in the end, he came near losing his sight. One day a person heard him utter the most plaintive cries, and asked him what was the matter. "What is the matter?" said he; "I am weeping over the sufferings and affronts of my Saviour; and my grief is increased when I think of the ingratitude of men who do not love him, and who live without thinking of him."



Every time he heard a lamb bleat, he melted into tears at the remembrance of Jesus, the Lamb without spot, who was immolated for the sins of the world. And being all inflamed with love, this holy man could recommend nothing so impressively to his brethren as the frequent remembrance of the passion of Christ.

The great servant of God, Brother Bernard of Corlien, a Capuchin, did not know how to read, and his fellow-religious wished to teach him. He went to ask advice from the crucifix, and Jesus answered him from the cross: "What necessity for books or reading? I am your book, —a book in which you can always read the love I have borne you."

The angels revealed to the blessed Johanna of the Cross that the divine Majesty took such complacency in sorrow for the passion of Christ, and that such sorrow was so grateful a sacrifice, that it was reckoned equal to the shedding of our blood, or the endurance of great afflictions.

St. Bernard declares that the mere thought of our Lord's passion is a spiritual communion. Father Balthazar Alvarez said that ignorance of the treasures which we possess in Jesus was the cause of the ruin of Christians. Hence, the favorite and most ordinary subject of his meditations was the passion of Jesus Christ. He dwelt particularly on these three great sufferings of our Lord—his poverty, his humiliations, his agonies. He recommended his penitents to meditate frequently on the passion of our Saviour, and said to them: "We must not think we have done anything until we have reached this point, that we never in our hearts forget Christ crucified." St. Theodore Studita cautions us that, though Easter is come, we must on no account let the memory of the passion fade away, but keep

the life-giving wounds, the cross, and the burial always before our eyes.

The blessed Albertus Magnus used to say that a single tear shed over our Lord's passion was better than a year's fast on bread and water, with watchings and disciplines. St. Augustine says : " What enkindles, urges, inflames, and drives me to love thee more than anything else, and to make thee lovely above everything else, is the most ignominious and bitter death which thou, O good Jesus ! didst endure for the work of our redemption. This alone, this altogether, easily claims for itself all our life, all our labor, all our devotion, and, finally, all our love. This, I say, best excites, most sweetly seeks, most amply multiplies our devotion." (" Conf." ii, 16.) St. Bonaventure says : " Who-soever wishes to increase always in virtue and grace, should meditate without ceasing on the passion of Jesus ; for nothing conduces more to sanctify a soul than the frequent remembrance of the sufferings of Christ." This, too, was the great devotion of our Blessed Lady, as she herself revealed to St. Bridget : " My thoughts and my heart were always in the sepulchre of my Son ; " and she bade the saint to be always meditating on his passion. So successfully did St. Bridget train her daughter Catharine in this devotion, that we read in Catharine's life how, every night, before going to bed, she spent four hours in succession, making genuflections and beating her breast, with many tears, because of her remembrance of Christ's passion, offering herself all the while as a holocaust to God.

One day the blessed Angela of Foligno heard from our Lord that the blessings which he would multiply upon those who were devoted to his passion, and upon those who imitate it, and upon those who compassionate it, were as

follows : “ Blessed are you of my Father who compassionate me, and who are sorrowing with me, and who, walking my road, have merited to wash your stoles in my blood. Blessed are you who compassionate me crucified for you, and afflicted with immense griefs, that I might satisfy for you, and redeem you from immense and eternal pains ; for, compassionating me in my poverty, sorrow, and contempt borne for yourselves, you have been found worthy. Blessed are you who shall be mindfully and devoutly compassionate towards my passion, which is the miracle of all ages, the salvation and life of the lost, and the sole refuge of sinners ; for you shall be truly partakers with me of the kingdom and glory and resurrection which I have acquired by it, and coheirs with me for ever and ever. Blessed are you of my Father and of the Holy Ghost, and truly blessed with the benediction which I shall give in the last judgment, because, when I came unto my own, you have not repulsed me, as my persecutors did ; but, by your compassion, have received me, a desolate stranger, into the home and hospitality of your heart. You have compassionated me, stretched naked on the cross, hungering, thirsting, weak, nailed, and dying. You have willed to be my companions, and in this you have truly fulfilled the works of mercy. Therefore shall you hear in that terrible hour, ‘ Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which was prepared for you before the foundation of the world.’ For I was hungry on the cross, and, at least by compassion, you gave me to eat. O happy you, truly happy, and blessed altogether ! for, if upon the cross I prayed to my Father with tears and weeping for my crucifiers and torturers, and excused them, saying, ‘ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,’ what shall I say for you

who have compassionated me, and been devout partners, when, not upon the cross, but all blissful in my glory, I shall judge the world ? ”

But what need have we to search for revelations to prove the excellency of the devotion to the passion of Jesus crucified ? Does not the Holy Scripture teach us that our Saviour thought continually on his passion and death ? “ My sorrow is continually before me.” (Ps. xxxvii, 18.) Do we not read in the Gospel that his passion was the subject of his discourse to his apostles and disciples, even so far as to speak of it to Moses and Elias, in the midst of the glory of his transfiguration on Mount Thabor ? And did he not carry with him his five wounds to heaven, to bear before his eyes the marks of his passion for all eternity ?

What shall we say of the great St. Paul ? Did he not profess that he knew nothing but Christ crucified ? What did he preach but the passion of Jesus Christ crucified ? In what did he glory but in the cross of our dear Saviour ? What other devotion had he than to be crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ ? Jesus crucified is the book in which we should often read. From it we learn to fear sin and to love God, who, to cancel sin, suffered so cruel a death, and who, to show us the extent of his love, underwent so many incomprehensible sufferings.

To love God,—how beautiful a thing it is ! Man was created by love : it is on this account that he is so prone to love. On the other hand, man is so great that nothing on this earth can satisfy him. It is only when he turns to God that he feels contented and happy. Take a fish out of the water, and it will die. Well, such is man without God. O how blessed a thing it is that we can please God, little and low as we are ! If a lost soul could but



once say, "My God, I love thee," it would be no longer in hell. But, alas for that poor soul! it has lost the power to love which it had received, and which it refused to use! Its heart is dried up like a bunch of grapes which has passed through the wine-press. There is no more happiness in that soul, no more peace, because no more love. "Unhappy souls," said St. Teresa, "they do not love." The goodness of God kindles the fire of hell. The lost will say: Oh! if God had loved us less, we should suffer less; hell would be more endurable. But to have been so much loved,—what anguish!

How God longs to see, and how dearly he loves, a heart that is wholly his! What delicate and loving caresses does he show, what good things, what delights, what glory, does he prepare in paradise for a heart that is wholly his! Devout souls, if Jesus gain us, we shall also gain Jesus. The advantage of such an exchange is all on our side. "Teresa," said our Lord, one day, to this saint,—“Teresa, up to to this time, you have not been all mine; now that you are all mine, be assured that I am all yours.” Love is a bond which binds the lover with the loved one. God has every wish to clasp and unite us to himself; but it is also necessary for us to strive and unite ourselves to God. If we wish God to give himself entirely to us, it is likewise necessary for us to give ourselves entirely to him, loving him with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with all our strength, so that not one fibre may be left in us which does not belong to God. According to the degree of love which we bear towards God when we finish the journey of life, will be the degree of love with which we shall continue to love him for all eternity. He, then, who would love God exceedingly in heaven, must love him very much on earth.

But "let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth," says St. John. (1 Epist. iii, 18.) We shall indeed show that we love our Lord in truth, if we endeavor, to the best of our power, to compensate him in some measure for the sufferings which he underwent for love of us. We can make this compensation by doing what our Lord said to St. Gertrude. "Ah!" exclaimed this saint one day,—“ah! my Lord, my only hope and the salvation of my soul! tell me how I can do thee at least a little good for this thy passion, to thee so bitter, to me so salutary?” And this was our Lord's answer: “When a man follows another's interests in preference to his own, in order to please me, he repays me the captivity which I endured in the morning when I was taken, pinioned, and grievously tormented for men's salvation. When he humbly acknowledges himself to be in fault about anything, he recompenses me for the judgment I underwent at the first hour when I was accused by false witnesses, and sentenced to death. When he restrains his senses from things which delight him, he repays me for the scourging which I endured at the third hour. When he obeys an ill-natured superior, he relieves the pain of my crown of thorns. When he is the injured party, but asks pardon first, he compensates for my carrying of the cross. When he almost goes beyond what he can do in extending charity to others, he repays for that extension which I so sharply endured when distended on the cross at the sixth hour. When, to hinder a sin, he does not mind sorrow or reproach, he pays me for my death, which I suffered for the salvation of the world at the ninth hour. When he is reproached and answers humbly, he, as it were, takes me down from the cross. When he prefers his neighbor to himself, and thinks him

more worthy of honor or any other good thing than himself, he pays me for my burial."

"St. Teresa was so inflamed with love at the thought of our blessed Lord's goodness in becoming man and dying for her, that she looked upon this life as a continued martyrdom, through her ardent desire of being united to her divine Spouse in heaven. It was her custom to sign all her letters *Teresa of Jesus*, to show that she lived for Jesus alone, and loved him alone. One day, when she was walking through the cloisters of her convent at Avila, she met a beautiful child, who stopped when he saw her, and looked up to her face with an engaging smile. The holy nun, wondering how he had been able to enter the convent unknown to her, asked him to tell her his name. 'I will, if you will tell me your own,' said the child. 'Mine?' said St. Teresa, smiling; 'I am called *Teresa of Jesus*.' 'And if you would know mine,' said the child, 'I am called *Jesus of Teresa*.' At the same moment he disappeared, leaving St. Teresa's heart overflowing with wonder and gratitude at the infinite goodness of our blessed Lord, who returns so tenderly the love of his unworthy creatures." (*"Anima Devota."*)

**19. By what sign do we profess our faith in Jesus crucified?**

*By the sign of the cross, because it reminds us of the death which Jesus Christ suffered for us on the cross.*

Boleslaus, King of Poland, used to wear around his neck a golden medal, with the features of his father stamped upon it. When about to undertake an important work, he would take the medal in his hand, gaze at it with tearful eyes, and say: "O dearly beloved father! may I never

do anything unworthy of thy royal name!" Thus, by means of a medal, did this king try to remember the blessings and the example of his father. Our dear Saviour has bestowed upon us blessings a thousand times greater than those which an earthly king can bestow upon his children. He wishes us never to forget them. There is, indeed, nothing more odious, even among men, than ingratitude. "The ungrateful man," says St. Irenæus, "is a vessel of ignominy into which God pours the gall of his anger." In order not to become guilty of ingratitude, Christ has left us several memorials of his divine benefits. The one which we find everywhere is the cross. It is now over eighteen hundred years since our blessed Saviour died upon the cross. Before his death, the cross was looked upon as a sign of ignominy and disgrace; but, as Christ had decreed to die upon the cross, he wished that the cross should be a sign of honor and veneration to the end of the world—a glorious mark and badge of all his followers; that it should be a memorial of the great mysteries of his holy religion. He, therefore, has been pleased to refer, on more than one occasion, to the cross, the instrument of his passion. For he says: "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. x, 38); and he observes to his disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. xvi, 24); and the Evangelist, in his enumeration of those terrible prognostics which are to herald the coming of the day of final judgment, mentions the appearance of the cross amid the heavens, where the sun shall then be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and whence the stars shall have fallen: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son



of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty." (Matt. xxiv, 30.) All the most learned and ancient fathers, as St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome, St. Hilarius, Theophylactus, and the Venerable Bede, are unanimous in interpreting "the sign of the Son of man" to signify the cross, and the ablest among our Biblical scholars have applauded such an interpretation.

This instrument of our redemption through the blood of Jesus was perpetually before the eyes of the eloquent St. Paul, who so often makes beautiful and appropriate allusions to it in almost every one of his Epistles, but more emphatically in the concluding part of his letter to the Galatians, where he exclaims: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This reverence for the cross was imparted by the apostles to the new believers, who, from considering it with horror as the instrument of ignominy, after their initiation in the Christian faith regarded it as the most glorious of trophies and the emblem of their victorious Master.

From the times of the apostles, the Christians have ever shown their love and veneration for the cross, by bearing this sacred mark upon themselves. For they oftentimes impressed their foreheads with this mystic sign, to manifest their own Christianity, or to recognize that of an unknown brother in the faith. Tertullian, who flourished in the year 194, observes: "At every step and movement, whenever we come in or go out, when we dress ourselves, or prepare to go abroad, at the bath, at table, when lights are brought in, or lying or sitting down,—whatever we be doing, we make the sign of the cross upon our foreheads."

St. John Chrysostom, who was Archbishop of Constantinople about the year 397, thus addresses his auditors: "Everywhere is the symbol of the cross present to us. On this account we paint and sculpture it on our brows, and we studiously imprint it on our souls and minds."

The sign of the cross, then, has ever been, for all Christians, a striking picture, recalling forcibly to their minds the sorrowful death of Jesus Christ upon the cross for poor wretched sinners.

**20. For what other reasons do we make the sign of the cross?**

1, *To put us in mind of the Blessed Trinity, saying: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; 2, to show that we look for grace only through Christ's merits of the cross.*

In blessing ourselves, we form the sign of the cross by lifting our right hand to the forehead and afterwards drawing, as it were, a line to the breast, and then another line crossing the former from the left shoulder to the right: but to attach a meaning to the action, we pronounce, whilst performing it, these words, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." By saying in the *name*, and not in the *names*, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we show our belief in the unity, or the one nature of the three divine persons; and by the words, "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," we proclaim our belief in the existence of three persons in the Godhead.

The pastor who imparts his benediction to his flock, or whilst dedicating anything to the service of the altar or to sacred purposes, forms a cross in the air, with his right hand extended towards the object he is going to bless.

Another mode of making this sign is practised, especially by priest and people at the celebration of Mass, just before the reading of the Gospel. It is then customary to sign with a distinct cross, traced by the edge of the thumb, the brow, the lips, and the breast.

As all spiritual and temporal blessings are granted by the heavenly Father in consideration of the sufferings and death of his Son on the cross, the holy Church uses this sacred sign in the daily office recited by her clergy, in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in the administration of the sacraments, and in all her sacred ceremonies. She has adopted this holy sign as her standard, and places it everywhere as the symbol of hope and the pledge of victory. We see it on her church-buildings, on her altars, on her sacred vestments, in her solemn processions, at the tombs of her departed children; and were we to pass through Catholic countries, we would behold it at the entrance of the ports, at the corners of the streets, on summits of the hills. Infidels, Jews, and heretics despise the cross, the instrument of our Lord's passion. But Almighty God has often wrought great miracles, in order to confirm the Christians in their love and veneration for the sacred sign of the cross.

Christ, who conquered the world, not by the sword, but by the ignominy of the cross, was pleased to make Constantine the Great triumph by that sacred sign, to put a stop to the long persecution, and to establish the Christian religion throughout his dominions. This emperor marched from the border of the Rhine, through Gaul and part of Italy, by Verona to Rome, against the tyrant Maxentius, who had declared war against him. Constantine, though he was not yet a Christian, earnestly invoked the one true

God, both on his march and the day before he gave battle; and Christ was pleased, by a double vision, to show him from what power he received the empire of the world. The fact is circumstantially related by Eusebius, as he heard it from Constantine himself. Having passed the Alps, and reached the plains of Italy, behold, as he was marching on, a little after midday, at the head of his troops, a luminous cross appeared in the open sky, above the sun, and upon the cross a legend expressing victory was distinctly seen by all, written thus in Greek characters: "In this be thou conqueror." The night following, Christ appeared to Constantine in his sleep, with the same sign, and commanded him to have a representation of it to be made, and to make use of it for his standard in battle. The emperor arose very early the next morning, imparted this second vision to his friends, and gave orders for an exact representation of the cross, as it appeared in the sky, to be made and blazoned in the imperial banner. This was the famous *Labarum*, which fifty chosen men were appointed to carry by turns before the emperor whenever he went to battle. It was a pole plated with gold, upon which was laid horizontally a cross bar, so as to form the figure of a cross. The top of the perpendicular shaft was adorned with a crown wrought with gold, and ornamented with sparkling precious stones.

"One day St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, having overthrown, in Burgundy, a famous and very ancient temple, he wished likewise to cut down a large pine-tree that stood near it. But to this he found the pagans entirely opposed; but they told him that, since he had so much confidence in his God, they would cut down the tree themselves, provided he would stand under it when it fell



Martin accepted the condition, and allowed himself to be tied on the side to which the tree was already inclining. A great crowd of people assembled to see the sight. All the saint's disciples feared for him, and looked upon him as a dead man. The tree, half cut, began, in fact, to fall upon him, when he simply made the sign of the cross; the pine, as if blown by a gust of wind, fell to the other side, on those of the spectators who thought themselves the safest. There arose a great cry, and a large number of idolaters embraced the faith of Christ." (Sulpic. Sever., *Life of St. Martin*.)

After the death of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, there was a tremendous earthquake all over the East. The seas overflowed their bounds, as if they would have submerged the earth by another deluge. At the sight of these prodigies, the inhabitants of Epidaurus, a small city of Greece, ran to St. Hilarion, and with tears besought him to have pity on them and come to their aid. They took him to the sea-shore. There St. Hilarion knelt on the sand, prayed with fervor, and made the sign of the cross three times over the troubled waters. Immediately there was a dead calm. All the people of Epidaurus witnessed this miracle, and, for long years after, they ceased not to remember it with gratitude. (St. Jerome, *Life of St. Hilarion*.) It was by the sign of the cross that St. Alphonsus de Liguori made a lava torrent coming from Mount Vesuvius, and threatening the city of Naples with destruction, take another direction.

The martyr, St. Tiburtius, condemned under the Emperor Diocletian to walk through a blazing fire, made the sign of the cross over it, and then walked over the burning coals without experiencing any injury. It is by the devout

use of the sign of the cross that such miracles have been performed almost by every saint. God speaks to us through these miracles. By them he wishes to impress upon us the great love and veneration which we should entertain for the instrument of his passion and of our redemption.

### **21. Should we often make the sign of the cross?**

*It is very useful to make it often with devotion, especially when going to bed and rising, before and after prayer, before every important action, and in all temptations and dangers.*

The good Catholic, trying to imitate the fervor of the saints, who glorified in the cross of Christ, is accustomed to sign himself with the sign of the cross, as soon as he awakes in the morning, and when he lies down to sleep, in order that he may rise and sleep under the blessing and protection of the cross of Christ. The good Catholic also makes the sign of the cross before and after his prayers. The Church begins her prayers and offices by making the sign of the cross, and invoking the three persons of the adorable Trinity: and, without the least doubt, there can be no better introduction to the exercises of religion. The sign of the cross, when made with faith and devotion, will recall all our wandering thoughts, and fix our attention upon the prayer which we are about to perform.

The sign of the cross assists us to nourish, in our souls, the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. In the first place, faith is exercised, because the sign of the cross recalls to our remembrance one of the fundamental articles of Christian doctrine; for it proclaims to us that the Son of God, the second person of the holy Trinity, took upon himself our human nature, and died upon the cross for

our salvation. In the second place, it nourishes and fortifies our hope : because this holy sign continually reminds us of the passion and the blood of Christ, on which the Christian reposes all his hope for grace at present, and for mercy and for happiness hereafter. In the third place, charity, or the love of God, is enkindled in us by this sacred emblem, which represents to us that ardent affection of the Almighty for us poor sinners, since he sent down from heaven his well-beloved Son to bleed upon the cross, and thus rescue us from an eternity of punishment.

The good Catholic also makes the sign of the cross before every important action. By this holy sign he draws down the blessing of Christ upon his labors, occupations and duties, and, at the close of the day, he will not have to reproach himself with the commission of wicked and dishonest acts. To make the sign of the cross before every action, and to become guilty of injustice in his dealings with his neighbor, are things incompatible. What servant has ever been unfaithful to his master, after having signed himself with the sign of the cross ? Who has been known to enter a place of sin—a public-house, a theatre, a ball-room, after having blessed himself by saying, In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ? A certain painter was accustomed to make the sign of the cross before he began his work. One day he was about to paint a subject of an immoral character. According to his habit he made the sign of the cross. No sooner had he done so than he at once perceived the great contrast between the sign of redemption and the subject which he was about to paint. He arrested his hand, and immediately laid aside the sinful work.

We should make the sign of the cross, especially in all

*temptations*, in order to obtain of God, through Christ's sufferings on the cross, the graces necessary to avoid all the snares of the devil. When we are tempted to sin; when evil thoughts arise in our minds; if we easily give way to impatience, anger, or impurity, let us at once make the sign of the cross on our forehead or breast. If, by certain circumstances, we are prevented from making it openly, let us at least make it secretly with faith and confidence, with a detestation of sin, and a sincere desire not to yield to the tempter, and we shall assuredly triumph over all his efforts to lead us into sin. St. Ephrem styles the sign of the cross the armor of a true Christian, and admonishes every one to cover himself with the sign of the cross as with a shield, signing with it his limbs and his heart: "For this is an invincible armor, and no one can hurt thee if thou art covered with it; for it is the conqueror of death, the destroyer of heresies, the opener of the gates of paradise, the prophetic guard of the Church." He who bears upon his person the image of his sovereign is protected against insult; and so, how secure must that Christian be against every attack of the enemy, who bears on his person the standard of the King of kings! At the sight of it the powers of hell are affrighted. St. Anthony, one of the fathers of the desert, used to say to his disciples: "I have only to make the sign of the cross, to put to flight all the delusions and spells of the demon. Yes, this sign of the cross of the Saviour, which has deprived him of his power, is enough to make him tremble."

Julian the Apostate one day entered a pagan temple, in company with a noted idolater. The latter having invoked the demons, they at once made their appearance: Julian



became alarmed ; and forgetting, for the moment, that he had abjured the Christian religion, he made the sign of the cross, as he had been formerly accustomed to do when any danger was near. Immediately the infernal spirits disappeared—so powerful and efficacious was this sign, when made even by a Christian renegade ! This miracle was the last effort of divine mercy to recall that wretched being to repentance : but the unhappy man's heart was hardened and insensible to every call of God.

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus was once on his way to Neocesarea, a city of Asia Minor. Being overtaken by a storm, he was obliged to take shelter with his travelling companions in a pagan temple, famous in that country, because the demon gave oracles therein. His first care was to pray to God, invoke our Lord Jesus Christ, and make the sign of the cross several times, to purify the air polluted by the smoke of pagan sacrifice. They spent the night quietly, and set out the next morning very early. Meanwhile the sacrificer of the temple came to perform his sacrilegious rites ; but in vain did he call upon his gods : the demons only appeared to tell him that they were going to depart from that temple, and had no longer any power there, because of what had taken place over-night. Furious at this result, the pagan priest hastened after St. Gregory, and threatened to denounce him to the magistrates for having penetrated into the temple and disturbed its ceremonies. The holy bishop heard him very calmly, and merely answered : “ Friend, the demon whom you serve is so weak and powerless, that I have only to say one word to make him either depart from a place or return to it again.” “ If that be so,” said the sacrificer, “ make him return to the temple.” St. Gregory tore a small

scrap from his book, and wrote on it these few words: "Gregory to Satan:—Enter!" He gave this note to the priest, who placed it on the altar of the temple, and again commenced sacrifices: the demons appeared as usual. The priest was so struck by this prodigy, which manifested the weakness of his gods, that he went again in search of St. Gregory and became a Christian. (Schmid et Belet, *Cat. Hist.*, I, 55.)

Finally, it is well to make the sign of the cross in all dangers. We are exposed to danger at almost every step we take. "Our life," says St. Alphonsus, "hangs, as it were, on a thread. We may, at every moment, meet with some accident. The preservation of our life is a continual miracle of divine Providence. When, then, we are in danger, when we are threatened with death, from fire or water, or epidemics or lightning, let us at once make the sign of the cross, and its saving power shall shield us from harm. Jesus Christ will rescue us from the danger, and bring us out of many great difficulties."

"St. William, Archbishop of York, in England, made, in 1154, a pilgrimage to Rome, which had kept him long away from his diocese. His return was an extraordinary event for every one; all work was suspended, and young and old went out in crowds to meet him. The throng was so great that, passing the wooden bridge over the river Ouse, on which the city of York is situated, the bridge gave way, and a multitude of people were precipitated into the river. At the sight, St. William is penetrated with grief; he stops, raises his eyes to heaven, excites his faith, and makes the sign of the cross over the river. Nothing more was required to save almost all those who had fallen into the water; the children especially were drawn out safe and

sound. God had compassion on their innocence and their tender age." (Godescard, *Lives of the Saints*, 8th June.)

**22. What became of the body of Jesus Christ after his death?**

*Joseph of Arimathea wrapped it in linen, and laid it in his own new tomb.*

After the death of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Christ, went boldly to Pilate, and begged the sacred body of our Lord. And Pilate, understanding that Jesus was dead, commanded that the body should be delivered to Joseph. Then Joseph and Nicodemus went and bought some beautiful fine linen from a shop, and, together with Mary Magdalen and other holy women, proceeded to Calvary to take down their Lord from the cross; and when they arrived at the top of Calvary, they placed a ladder against the cross, and, after drawing out the nails from the hands and feet of Jesus, and removing the crown of thorns, they lowered the body into the arms of the Blessed Virgin, who received that lifeless form upon her breast.

Then the holy women embalmed our Lord's body, and wrapped it up in a winding-sheet of fine linen with spices; and, when wrapped up, it was carried to the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, and there laid in a tomb, cut out of a rock in the garden, called in Holy Scripture a new monument. Against the door of the monument St. Joseph rolled a large stone for safety's sake.

Now, when we confess that Christ was buried, we make his burial, as it were, a distinct part of this article. This is not done because it presents any difficulty which is not implied in what we have said of his death; for,

believing, as we do, that Christ died, we can also easily believe that he was buried. The word "buried" was added in the Creed: first, that Christ's death may be rendered more certain, for the strongest proof of a person's death is the interment of his body; and, secondly, to render the miracle of his resurrection more authentic and more illustrious.



## THE FIFTH ARTICLE.

### **1. Which is the fifth article of the Creed ?**

*“ He descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead.”*

This article contains the history of our Lord during the three days which followed his death ; that is to say, from the afternoon of Good-Friday till the morning of Easter Sunday, it is divided into two parts : the first speaks of the descent of our dear Lord into hell ; the second, of his resurrection from the dead.

### **2. What means, “ He descended into hell ” ?**

*It means that the soul of Jesus Christ, after his death, went into Limbo, where the souls of the saints who died before Christ were detained.*

The Scripture points out to us three places in the bowels of the earth, which go by the general name of *hell* : 1. The place of the damned, which is called *gehenna*, and the *abyss* or *bottomless pit*, and hell-fire. This is hell, properly so called, as being the deepest of all, and at the greatest distance from heaven. 2. The prison of purgatory, where those who have died in venial sin, or who have not fully satisfied for the temporal punishment due to mortal sin, are detained until they are cleansed and purified from every stain and imperfection, and have fully satisfied for what they owe to the divine justice, by “ paying the last farthing.” It is in this sense that the word *hell* is to be

understood, when, in the Mass for the dead, the Church prays to God to deliver the souls of the faithful from the pains of hell. 3. The prison of limbo, where the souls of the patriarchs and prophets, and of all the just, who died before the coming of Christ, were detained, awaiting the coming of the Redeemer. Into this last place, "limbo," it was that the soul of Christ *descended* at his death. Limbo is, too, called paradise; for it was of limbo that Jesus Christ spoke, when he said to the good thief: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

In limbo were the souls of our first parents, Adam and Eve; there were the souls of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of all the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, who had often preached to many of the Jews, and tried every means to convert them to God, but all to no purpose. In limbo were, too, all the good and holy souls who died before Christ. Among the Jews who died in favor with God, St. Joseph, the guardian of our Lord, and spouse of the Blessed Virgin, was there. He had, a few years before, died peacefully in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Jesus Christ, then, descended into limbo, to preach the gospel to those holy souls who were there detained. He announced to them the happy tidings of their redemption. "He (Christ) was put to death indeed in the flesh," says St. Peter, "but enlivened in the spirit; in which also coming, he preached to those spirits that were in prison" (1 Pet. iii, 18, 19); that is, he explained to them all that he had done for mankind in order to redeem them. Those holy souls were overjoyed when they learned that they were soon to ascend with our Lord to the glorious dwelling of heaven.

### 3. Why could not those saints go to heaven immediately after death?

*Because heaven was shut against them on account of the sin of our first parents, and could not be opened to any one except by the death of Christ.*

The souls of all the just who died before the coming of Christ, could not go immediately to heaven after their death; for, on account of the sin of Adam and Eve, heaven was closed against them and all their posterity, and could only be opened by the death of Christ. That the patriarchs and prophets, and all the just souls of the Old Law, should enter heaven, it was first necessary that the blood of Jesus Christ should blot out the handwriting of sin and death recorded against them, on account of our first parents' transgression—it was necessary that he, as our precursor, should first enter, and with his cross burst open the brazen gates which sin had closed, and reëstablish that happy intercourse between God and man which had been interrupted for so many years.

### 4. When did those souls go to heaven?

*When Christ ascended into heaven.*

The souls of the saints who died before Christ did not leave limbo immediately after the visit of our Lord to them. Their sojourn in that place was prolonged until the day of Christ's ascension into heaven; and that event did not take place until the fortieth day after his resurrection, and consequently the forty-third day after his descent into the prison of limbo. On Ascension-day, when he mounted up to heaven, all the holy souls in limbo were set free; all the ancient holy patriarchs, prophets, and other saints, against whom until then the gates of heaven

had been shut, were then carried up in triumph by their Redeemer: "He hath led captivity captive." They were formerly captives of the devil and sin: Christ, having powerfully rescued them from their tyranny, leads them to heaven as the trophies of his victory, as the rich spoils taken by him, as the proofs of the overthrow of the enemy, as the price of his adorable blood, and as the ornament and glory of his triumph. In company with him they pierced the highest heavens, and were placed on bright, glorious seats in his Father's kingdom, where they shall reign with him for ever and ever.

**5. When the body and the soul of Christ were separated, were they also separated from his divinity?**

*No; the divine person always remained inseparably united with his body and with his soul.*

Death separated the soul from Christ's body; but it did not separate the divinity of Christ either from his soul or from his body. From the very first moment of Christ's life on earth, his divinity has never been separated from his body or soul, but always continued united to both. During the whole time that the body of Christ was hanging on the cross, and whilst it remained in the grave, his divinity was united to it; so that his body then, equally as when united to his soul, was the body of the Son of God, and, as such, entitled to our respect and adoration.

It is not, then, our belief that the body of Christ alone was buried. His Godhead, too, was buried. According to the rule of Catholic faith, we say, with the strictest truth, that God was born of a virgin, that God died. Now, as his divinity was never separated from his body, which was laid in the sepulchre, we truly confess that God was buried.



**6. What means, "The third day he rose again from the dead"?**

*It means that, on the third day after his death, Christ reunited, by his own power, his soul to his body, and rose from the grave.*

When Jesus was laid in the grave, the Scribes and Pharisees, pretending that there was a design on the part of Christ's disciples to steal away his body, and then to spread a report of his being risen from the dead, came to Pilate, and desired him to order a guard of soldiers over the sepulchre. Meanwhile, the soul of our divine Saviour remained in limbo until Sunday morning. A great number of the angels kept guard over the holy sepulchre. Some gathered the drops of divine blood, and the pieces of sacred flesh torn by the blows, as also everything that related to the integrity of the most holy humanity. The angels most reverently replaced the sacred relics which they had gathered. The body of Christ was, in no degree, corrupted in the sepulchre, according to the prediction of the prophet: "Thou shalt not give thy Holy One to see corruption." (Ps. xv, 10; Acts ii, 31.) Now, while Jesus was yet alive, he had, on different occasions, openly declared that he would raise his body to life again the third day: "I lay down my life," he said to his disciples, "that I may take it again." (John x, 17.) And again: "The Son of man shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. And after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and *the third day he shall rise again.*" (Luke xviii, 32, 33.) And on another occasion, when the Jews asked him for a sign of his divine mission, he had said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In these mysterious

words he alluded to his future resurrection, though the Jews, and even his own disciples, thought at the time that he spoke of the Jewish temple or church, in which the solemn sacrifices were offered: "But he spoke," as the Holy Scripture adds, "of the temple of his body." (John ii, 19, 21.)

The time was now come when our blessed Lord was to accomplish these prophecies. At the first dawn of Sunday morning, the earth quaked violently. That was the signal of Christ's resurrection; and it was then that our dear Saviour reunited his soul to the divine body, communicated to it life immortal and glorious, and arose from the tomb, leaving the seal which closed up the mouth of the tomb *untouched*. At the same time an angel descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone and sat upon it: "His countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow; and for fear of him the guard were struck with terror, and became as dead men."

### **7. On what day did Christ rise?**

*Christ rose, glorious and immortal, on Easter Sunday.*

It was on Easter Sunday morning that our dear Saviour came forth glorious and immortal from the grave, as is related in the Gospel: "On the first day of the week Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre; and she saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre. She ran, therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith to them: They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

"Peter, therefore, went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the sepulchre. And they both ran together,

and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And when he stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying, but yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that had been about his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, wrapt up into one place. Then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed. The disciples, therefore, departed again to their home.

“But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to him: Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her, Mary! She, turning, saith to him: Rabboni! which is to say Master. Jesus saith to her: Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them: *I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.* Mary Magdalen cometh, and telleth the disciples: I have seen the Lord, and these things he said to me.” (John xx.)

**8. Did Christ still retain in his glorified body the marks of his sufferings ?**

*He still retained, in his hands, feet, and side, the marks of his wounds : 1, in testimony of his victory over hell ; 2, as a proof that he rose in the very same body in which he suffered ; 3, to show them on the day of judgment for the consolation of the just, and for the confusion of the wicked.*

In the time of his passion, our divine Saviour had lost the four principal privileges that man may possess. His executioners deprived him of his clothes, leaving him in extreme poverty ; they deprived him of all honor, by loading him with the most outrageous contempt ; they deprived him of his health, by inflicting upon him the most frightful torments ; they deprived him of his most precious life, by inflicting on him a most cruel death. But, in arising from the tomb, he regained all these privileges, added to and multiplied beyond measure. He who before was poor and indigent became the Lord of the universe. He who, but three days before, was a "worm of the earth, the opprobrium of men, the outcast of the people," is now crowned with glory and honor, and seated at the right hand of the Most High. He who was before "a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, in whom there was no sound part, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot," recovered his vigor, becoming victorious over hell and sin. He changes his weakness into power and strength, and the ignominy of his passion into honor and glory. His body thenceforth shines resplendent for all eternity, endowed with the four qualities of glorified bodies : that is to say, his body is exempt from pain, sickness and death forever : "Death shall have no more dominion over him" (1 Cor. xv, 42) ; it is, like a spirit, enabled to penetrate all



material objects, and to be unarrested by material obstacles ; it is endowed with agility. By virtue of this power, the risen Saviour traversed space with the rapidity of thought, and was in a moment where he willed to be. His body was also endowed with the gift of brightness. As a result of this property, the body of the risen Saviour shone forth with greater brightness and splendor than the sun, each separate part of it resembling a sun in its dazzling brilliancy. He has overthrown in the Red Sea of his blood "the horse and the rider:" that is, the flesh, the world, and the devil.

Christ, moreover, willed to preserve in his body the marks of his wounds. This we know from the Gospel, which tells us that, after his resurrection, Christ appeared to his apostles and showed them the marks of his wounds, and asked, especially, the Apostle St. Thomas to look at his hands, and put his hand into his side, and then told him not to be incredulous but faithful, after having seen him and the marks of his sufferings. Now, Christ willed to preserve the marks of his wounds, in order that the cause of the glorification of his body should not be obscured by the brightness of its glory ; thus affirming forever that he rose in the same body in which he suffered, and won his glory and the victory over death and hell by the sufferings and death of that same body.

Another reason why our blessed Saviour preserved the prints of his wounds in his glorified body is, that they might serve as a token and memorial of the love he bears us, which constrained him to suffer and die for us. These wounds ever recall to him the price of our redemption, and move him to love us continually for whom he has paid so high a price. Finally, our risen Saviour wished

to preserve the marks of his wounds, in order that he might one day show them to the damned, and upbraid them for their cruelty and ingratitude in rejecting his love, and crucifying him afresh by their sins. It is also for the sake of his elect that Jesus preserves his wounds, in order that they may forever rejoice over the unspeakable love which beams forth from them. If we do not follow the great multitude of the enemies of Jesus, but are found amongst the small number of his disciples, then we may confidently hope that his sacred wounds will be to us an inexhaustible fountain of joy.

### 9. How do we know that Christ rose from the dead ?

*From the testimony of the apostles and his disciples, who, during forty days, often saw him, touched him, ate and conversed with him ; and St. Paul tells us that our risen Saviour "was seen by more than five hundred at once." (1 Cor. xv, 6.)*

Christ did not remain in the grave during three whole days, but, as he lay in the sepulchre during one whole natural day, during part of the preceding day and part of the following, he is said, with the strictest truth, to have lain in the grave for three days, and on the third day to have risen again from the dead. To declare his divinity, he deferred not his resurrection to the end of the world ; whilst at the same time, to prove his humanity, and the reality of his death, he rose not immediately, but on the third day after his death,—a space of time sufficient to prove that he had really died.

The fathers of the first Council of Constantinople added here the words, "according to the Scriptures," which they received from apostolical tradition, and embodied with

the Creed, because the same apostle teaches the absolute necessity of the mystery of the resurrection, when he says: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, for you are yet in your sins." (1 Cor. xv, 14, 17.) Hence St. Augustine, admiring our belief of this article, says: "It is of little moment to believe that Christ died: this, the pagans, Jews, and all the wicked believe; in a word, all believe that Christ died: but that he rose from the dead, is the belief of Christians; to believe that he rose again, this we deem of great moment." (In Ps. cxx, 4.) Hence it is that our Lord very often spoke to his disciples of his resurrection; and seldom or never of his passion without adverting to his resurrection. Thus, when he said, "The Son of man shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death," he added: "And the third day he shall rise again." (Luke xviii, 32, 33.)

Now, that Christ arose from the dead by his own divine power, is a fact of which not the slightest doubt can be entertained. The evidence of those who often saw him and spoke with him after his resurrection—who ate with him and touched his wounds, performed miracles in the name of the risen Saviour, and then sealed the truth of their testimony with their blood, clearly proves that Jesus arose from the dead.

The evidence of the apostles as to the resurrection of Christ, their Master, is undoubted; for the nature of their depositions rejects the notion of their being deceived respecting the fact. If Jesus Christ had appeared but once or twice to two or three of his disciples, and then had only spoken to them a few passing words, there might be some

reason to infer that they were deceived as to the presence of their Master ; but he appeared often and often to them, he appeared to *all* the apostles, and to more than five hundred disciples at the same time, and during these repeated apparitions had lengthened conversations with them. The Gospel tells us that he appeared first to Magdalen, to recompense her faith and love for him ; then to the pious women who came to embalm his body ; after this to St. Peter, chief of the apostles ; to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus ; and to the eleven apostles who were assembled in a room, the doors being shut. He showed them the wounds in his hands, feet, and side ; he ate and drank with them ; he explained the Scriptures to them ; he unfolded to them the great truths which they were to preach to the nations ; he conferred on them great powers, among which was that of *loosing* and *retaining* sin. He instructed them ; he consoled and encouraged them ; he foretold the persecutions that they were to meet with, and traced out for them the line of conduct which they were to pursue. All these different interviews, and all these many and varied discourses, are so many palpable proofs for the truth of Christ's resurrection. So many details, and so connected and circumstantial an account, place beyond all doubt the evidence of those who depose to all these facts.

What adds the greatest weight to their evidence is their *slowness of belief* : and for this they were often reproached by Jesus Christ, both during his life and after his resurrection. When, a short time before his death, he foretold to them, for the third time, that he would rise again from the dead, so faint was the idea they had of it, that they scarcely understood what he said. It was to them,



according to St. Luke, a riddle which they could not unravel. When, on the very morning of Christ's resurrection, the holy women related to them what they had seen, so far from believing their narration, they considered it as the result of a disordered imagination; and when, at last, they themselves beheld him for the first time, they thought they saw a ghost. "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken!" said our Lord to the disciples going to Emmaus. "Except I shall see in his hands," said St. Thomas, "the print of the nails, and put my finger in the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John xx, 25.) Now, men, with minds so disposed, could be convinced of the truth of Christ's resurrection only by the clearest proofs. And Christ did not fail so to convince them. Witness St. Thomas. His incredulity was inexcusable. He neither believed the prediction of his divine Master, nor the testimony of St. Peter, who had seen our Lord after his resurrection. His presumption was extreme: for he preferred his own judgment to that of all the apostles, whom he accused of simplicity. He is ungrateful to his Lord and Master for the graces he had received, and the dignity to which he had been elevated. He has the temerity to prescribe laws to his Sovereign and his God; and were he not wanting in reverence and respect, the very thought of putting his hands in the sacred wounds of our Saviour would cause him to tremble with awe. Nevertheless, Jesus, with inconceivable meekness, bears with the infidelity of his disciple, and prepares a sovereign remedy for his incredulity and the fortifying of our faith. In his unparalleled charity, our divine Saviour seeks out the faithless one. "He enters, the doors being shut:" his custom is to knock at the door

of the heart and await its opening. "I stand at the door and knock : if any man open to me, I will enter." But here he performs a miracle. "He enters, the doors being shut." To heal the incredulity of his disciple, he displays an act of that omnipotence which all creatures unresistingly obey. He shows him his wounds. "Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands ; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side." St. Thomas knew not that his Lord and his God was present when he said : "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now he discovers that nothing can be concealed from the infinite wisdom of his Master, who, with a charity commensurate with that wisdom, sweetly invites the disciple to touch those sacred wounds, whence issues the light of faith to illuminate, as had previously rushed the blood to redeem, the human race. The charity of the apostle is rekindled on touching the sacred wounds of his divine Master, who saved him from the dangers of the abyss into which he had fallen, by showing his hands and his side, the view of which raised him up, even to that admirable confession of the Divinity, "My Lord and my God!"

O what joy to this apostle ! With what ardent gratitude is his soul replenished in return for so singular a grace ! Happy saint ! how great the favor to put your hand into that heart of mercy,—that side, the source of salvation, in which we are saved from the wrath of God, find healing for all our spiritual maladies, are engendered to grace, and elevated to eternal glory.

How touching is this conduct of our risen Saviour towards Thomas ! He concedes to him all that he had

required in order to believe. He speaks kindly to him, as if he would say : "I know all that thou hast said during my absence, all that thou hast required : come, see and feel my hands and my side, and believe." Thus lovingly does Jesus convince him and the other apostles of his resurrection.

**10. What should we learn from the resurrection of Christ ?**

*1, That Christ is true God ; 2, that we, too, shall one day rise from the dead.*

1. From the resurrection of Christ we should learn that he is God. By the word resurrection we are not merely to understand that Christ was raised from the dead—a privilege common to many others with him ; but that he rose by his own power and virtue, a prerogative peculiar to him alone : for it is incompatible with our nature, nor was it ever given to man to raise himself, by his own power, from death to life. This was an exercise of power reserved for the all-powerful hand of God, as these words of the apostle declare : "For, although he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God." (2 Cor. xiii, 4.) This divine power was never separated either from his body whilst in the grave, or from his soul whilst disunited from his body ; it existed in both, and gave to both a capability of reuniting : and thus did the Son of God, by his own power, return to life, and rise again from the dead. This we have from the divine lips of our Saviour himself. "I lay down my life," says he, "that I may take it again ; and I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again." (John x, 17, 18.) Christ, then, having raised himself from the dead, has proved himself God.

He is indeed what he has declared himself, the only Son of God, equal to his Father. He is arisen: his religion, then, is founded on a firm base, against which the storms of ages rage in vain—against which the efforts of hell are directed to no purpose, except to prove its perpetual duration. Christ has arisen: his witnesses, then, must be believed, and the truths they taught must be received. The prophecies which foretold the resurrection, with all the other truths contained in the inspired writings, must be admitted as true; and all these being acknowledged, Christianity is undoubtedly the religion of God.

2. From the resurrection of Christ, we shall also learn that we, too, shall one day rise from the dead. As it was the peculiar privilege of Christ to raise himself from the dead, so, in like manner, it is the peculiar privilege of Christ to be the first who enjoyed this divine prerogative of rising from the dead: for he is called in Scripture, "The first-begotten of the dead" (Apoc. 1, 5); and also: "The first-born from the dead" (Col. 1, 18). The apostle also says: "Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep: for, by a man, came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also, in Christ all shall be made alive. But every one in his own order: the first-fruits, Christ; then they that are of Christ, who have believed in his coming." (1 Cor. xv, 20–23.) These words of the apostle are to be understood of a perfect resurrection, by which we are resuscitated to eternal life, being no longer subject to death. In this resurrection Christ holds the first place: for, if we speak of resurrection, that is, of a return to life, subject to the necessity of dying again, many were thus raised from the dead before Christ (3 Kings xvii, 22; 4 Kings iv, 34); all



of whom, however, were restored to life, to die again. But Christ the Lord, having conquered death, rose again to die no more, according to this clear testimony of the apostle: "Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more: death shall no longer have dominion over him." (Rom. vi, 9.)

From what has been said, we can perceive the important advantages which the resurrection of our Lord has conferred on the faithful. In his resurrection we acknowledge him to be the immortal God, full of glory, the conqueror of death and hell: and this we are firmly to believe and openly to profess of Jesus Christ.

Again, the resurrection of Christ brings about our resurrection, not only as its efficient cause, but also as its model. Thus, with regard to the resurrection of the body, we have this testimony of the apostle: "By a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. xv, 21.) To accomplish the mystery of our redemption in all its parts, God made use of the humanity of Christ as its efficient instrument; and hence, his resurrection is the efficient cause of ours. It is also the model. His resurrection was the most perfect of all; and as his body, rising to immortal glory, was changed, so shall our bodies also, before frail and mortal, be restored and clothed with glory and immortality; or, to use the language of the apostle: "We look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of his glory." (Phil. iii, 20, 21.)

## THE SIXTH ARTICLE.

### 1. What is the sixth article of the Creed?

*“He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”*

Jesus Christ is the first-born of the Father; the first-born amongst the dead; the first-born of those risen from the tomb. He has accomplished the will of his Father in all things, announced the Gospel, fulfilled the prophecies, paid the ransom for mankind, delivered the captive souls from limbo, instituted the sacraments as fountains of grace to flow forth to the utmost ends of the earth, atoned for the sins of the world, triumphed over death, broke the gates of hell, vanquished Satan and stripped him of his power over mankind, confounded the Jews, was victorious over his enemies, and arose to a life of infinite glory. He shall, therefore, be the first who shall enter into heaven. “I ascend,” he says, “to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.” (John xx, 17.) He humbled himself; he was obedient to death; he offered himself upon the cross; but when he ascended into heaven, his humility and obedience were crowned with a diadem of immortal glory and exalted to the throne of the Godhead.

### 2. What means, “He ascended into heaven”?

*It means that Christ, by his own power, with soul and body, ascended into heaven.*

Christ ascended into heaven by his own power, and not by the power of another, as did Elias, who was taken

up into heaven in a fiery chariot (4 Kings ii, 11); or as the Prophet Habacuc (Dan. xiv, 35), or Philip the Deacon, who were borne through the air by the divine power, and traversed the distant regions of the earth (Acts viii, 39). Neither did Christ ascend into heaven solely by the exercise of his supreme power as God, but he also ascended by virtue of the power which he possessed as man. Although human power alone was insufficient to raise him from the dead, yet the virtue with which the blessed soul of Christ was endowed, was capable of moving the body as it pleased; and his body, now glorified, readily obeyed the soul. Hence we believe that Christ ascended into heaven, as God and man, by his own power.

### **3. Did Christ ascend into heaven immediately after rising from the dead?**

*No; he still remained on earth for forty days, to teach his apostles, and to show that he was truly risen from the dead.*

After Christ was risen from the dead, he remained on earth forty days. During that time he often appeared to his apostles, and instructed them in the duties which they were to perform when he should leave them, telling them, at one time, that whatever they should bind or loose on earth, he would bind or loose in heaven; at another time, he commissioned them to "go and teach all nations," saying that he should be with them "all days, even to the consummation of the world." He opened their eyes that they might understand the Scriptures, and promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, who should teach them all truth. Our blessed Saviour having thus laid the foundations of his Church on a strong basis, and having commanded his

apostles and their successors to govern it, was then pleased to remove himself from this world, and to take possession of that glory and happiness which was due to his victory over sin and death.

During the forty days he remained on earth, he did not live with his apostles in the world as he had done before his death ; and the reasons were, that he might conceal himself from the Jews and the impious who were unworthy of his presence ; that he might show the difference between his mortal and glorious life, and also that he might make his resurrection a model for our spiritual resurrection from sin, by pointing out that, when we arise from the grave of sin, we must truly, as he did, shun this world, and live for a better.

#### **4. When did Christ ascend into heaven ?**

*Forty days after his resurrection Christ ascended into heaven, from Mount Olivet, in presence of his disciples.*

It is related, in the Holy Scripture, that our blessed Redeemer, having given his last instructions to his apostles, led them forth to Mount Olivet, near to the village of Bethania. This little village, the abode of Martha and Mary, had often been the resting-place of Jesus after the labors of his public preaching in the neighboring city of Jerusalem, from which Bethania is about two miles distant. Near to the same spot, and situated likewise at the foot of Mount Olivet, were the village of Gethsemani and the Garden of Olives, where our blessed Lord had, a few weeks before, suffered his cruel agony, and been betrayed by Judas into the hands of his enemies. The same place was now to be the scene of his most glorious triumph. Having reached the summit of the Mount with his twelve apostles, he raised



himself from the ground, not suddenly, but gently, that the disciples might have a longer time to indulge their holy feelings of joy, amazement and desire, and that the impression might sink deep into their hearts ; and lifting up his hands, he gave them his last parting blessing. Then, by the same almighty power by which he had burst the bonds of death and risen from the tomb, he rose from the earth and ascended to the heavens, until at length a bright cloud hid him from the eyes of his wondering disciples. Thousands of angels no doubt accompanied him with joyful canticles on this his glorious entrance into his heavenly kingdom, along with those happy souls, the first-fruits of his victory over hell, whom he had brought from limbo to share his triumph. And tens of thousands of the heavenly host went forth to meet him, and conduct him, with songs of triumph and joyous welcome, to the glorious throne, prepared for him, as man, at the right hand of his eternal Father.

It is related, by the holy fathers, that our blessed Lord left imprinted on Mount Olivet, on the spot from which he ascended into heaven, the traces of his sacred footsteps. St. Augustine, who lived about four hundred years after Christ, declares that they were there in his day ; and St. Paulinus adds that the spot could never be covered with any pavement, though this had often been attempted, and that no violence had ever been able to efface them. These precious relics of our blessed Redeemer have in all ages been visited by the faithful with the greatest veneration. St. Bernardine of Sienna tells of a gentleman, well known for his fervor and piety, who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He longed to visit every spot that had received the impress of our Lord's sufferings ; and, after

going to confession and making his communion with great devotion, he set out on his travels. He first stopped at Nazareth, where the great mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished. He then proceeded to Bethlehem, to kneel at the spot in which our Lord first deigned to visit this earth as a suffering Infant. He walked by the banks of the Jordan, the scene of our Lord's baptism, and went to the desert which had witnessed that wonderful forty days' fast; to the mountain where Jesus was transfigured; to the house at Jerusalem consecrated by the institution of the Holy Eucharist; to the Garden of Olives; to the Pretorium, and to Calvary, where the awful sacrifice was consummated. He visited the scene of our Lord's burial and resurrection, and finally ascended Mount Olivet, fondly recalling the blessing which Christ gave to the apostles before his ascension. After visiting every place which was in any way connected with our Lord's life and death, with a heart glowing with love, he exclaimed: "O Jesus, Jesus, my much-loved Saviour! since I can no longer follow thy footsteps on earth, call me to thyself in heaven." And his prayer was immediately heard; for it was no sooner uttered than he expired. The intensity of his love for Jesus had broken his heart; and after death these words were found engraven on his breast: "Jesus, my love."

##### **5. What means, "Sitteth at the right hand of God"?**

*It means that Christ, even as man, is exalted above all created beings, and shares in the power and glory of the divine majesty.*

"And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of

God." (Mark xvi, 19.) These words, "Sitteth at the right hand of God," are not to be taken in their literal meaning, because God the Father has no hands; they are a figure to express the glory which Jesus Christ possesses in heaven. As, amongst men, he who sits at the right hand occupies the most honorable place, so, in like manner, to express the glory which Christ, as man, enjoys above all others, we confess that he sits at the right hand of his eternal Father. This, however, does not signify a position of the body, but declares the fixed and permanent possession of royal and supreme power and glory, which Christ received from the Father. In the Incarnation, his soul was united to a mortal and passible body; in the Resurrection, both soul and body were glorified; in the Ascension, the glory was perfected, being raised to the throne of the Divinity; as the apostle says: "Raising him up from the dead, and setting him on his right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality and power, and virtue and domination, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and he has subjected all things to his feet." (Eph. i, 20-22.) These words manifestly imply that this glory belongs to our Lord in so eminent a manner, that it is inconsistent with the nature of any other created being; and for this reason, in another place, the apostle asks: "To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?" (Heb. i, 13.) His being seated, moreover, marks the end of his labors and combats, the consummation of his work, and the stability of his everlasting kingdom.

**6. Is Christ, then, not present in all places ?**

*As God, he is everywhere ; but, as God-man, he is only in heaven and in the holy Eucharist.*

Although Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, yet he has not altogether withdrawn his bodily presence from us. Jesus left his Father and came into the world, without quitting the bosom of his Father ; and he went out of the world to return to his Father, without leaving the world. His love for the Father raised him to heaven ; his love for mankind keeps him on earth. The one draws him on high, the other makes him stay here below. He has satisfied the one, by ascending into heaven ; and the other, by remaining with us on earth in the blessed sacrament.

**7. Why did Christ ascend into heaven ?**

*1, To take possession of his glory, as conqueror of death and hell ; 2, to be our mediator and advocate ; 3, to send the Holy Ghost to his disciples ; 4, to open heaven, and prepare a place for his followers.*

1. Christ ascended into heaven to take possession of his glory as conqueror of death and hell. The Son of God came down from heaven to destroy the empire of the devil, and to be the conqueror of death. He vanquished Satan by his sufferings and death upon the cross ; he became victorious over death by his glorious resurrection. Having gained these victories, nothing more remained to be done by him except to return in triumph to heaven, to take possession, not only of the throne of his glory, and the kingdom which he had purchased at the price of his blood, but also to attend to whatever regards the salvation of his people. By ascending into heaven, he has shown us that



his kingdom is not of this world, is not earthly, as the Jews expected, but is a spiritual and eternal kingdom.

2. Christ ascended into heaven to be our advocate. According to the Apostle St. Paul, Christ also ascended into heaven, "that he may appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. ix, 24), and discharge for us the office of advocate with the Father. "My little children," says St. John, "these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just, and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John ii, 1, 2.) Christ presents to his Father those wounds which he received for our redemption; through those wounds he supplicates the divine mercy in our behalf. Christ is also our advocate in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in which he offers to him all that he has done for us. As our advocate, Jesus Christ offers to his Father our penances, good works, and prayers, which become acceptable through union with his merits. What a consolation for us to know that Jesus continues the great work of our redemption, by exercising the office of advocate in our favor; to know that, on the right hand of his Father, he is still our mediator, our redeemer, our high priest, our victim, our king, our judge, our physician, our loving friend, having our interests at heart, and desirous of nothing so much as that we should fill those seats which the rebellious angels have lost forever.

3. Christ ascended into heaven to send down the Holy Ghost to his disciples. Jesus Christ, before quitting this world to return to his Father, told his apostles and disciples of his intention of leaving them; and finding that this announcement filled them with bitter sorrow and grief, he consoles them by saying that, after his departure, he

would not leave them orphans, but would send down the Holy Ghost to strengthen and comfort them. The wonderful effects that the Holy Spirit would produce on them, he also described. He promised them that this other Comforter would instruct them in all things, would teach them all truth, and would clothe them with strength from on high: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you. . . . But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me: and you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning." (John xiv, 26; xv, 26, 27.) In the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke thus relates Christ's promise of sending the Holy Ghost: "But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts i, 8.) That promise Jesus Christ fulfilled after his ascension into heaven. He was not long in possession of his Father's throne, when the expected Comforter descended upon the apostles.

4. Christ ascended, that he might open heaven, and prepare a place for his followers. When Jesus ascended triumphantly to heaven, the holy angels, with great rejoicing, came forth to meet him. They welcomed him as the conqueror of death and hell; as the good shepherd who had sought and found the wandering sheep; as the beneficent Father who has received back the lost son; as the Redeemer of mankind. The souls of the just whom he had delivered from limbo, accompany him in rapturous

ecstasy, singing the song of praise so dear to Jesus : "Thou art worthy, O Lord ! to take the book, and open the seals thereof ; because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in thy blood out of every tribe and tongue, and people and nation." (Apoc. v, 9.) And the angels sing : "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction." And having come near to the gates of heaven, a voice is heard, saying : "Lift up your gates, O ye princes ! and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates !" (Ps. xxiii, 7.) It was then that the gates of heaven were opened again for the first time since the fall of our first parents.

"And I," said Christ to his disciples, "dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom . . . that you may sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke xxii, 29, 30.) Jesus disposes absolutely of all things in heaven and on earth ; he disposes of our life and death, of our fortune and honor, of all that concerns us : and these dispensations of his providence are intended to prepare us for our union with God in heaven. This he has predestined for us from eternity, and prepared from the beginning of the world, assigning to us the place forfeited by the rebel angels. For this he was born, for this he lived, died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Wherefore, on entering into the world, or ascending Mount Calvary, or returning to the bosom of his heavenly Father, our divine Saviour could say : "I go to prepare a place for you." (John xiv, 2.) But he admonishes us all, saying : "Be you then also ready ; for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come." (Luke xii, 40.) Only those of the virgins who were prepared

were admitted to the nuptial feast. We cannot possess beatitude in this life; but we can merit it and prepare for it, as Christ has prepared it for us, that is to say, by sufferings. Can we too dearly purchase that for which the Son of God poured out the last drop of his most precious blood on the gibbet of the cross? By his death and resurrection he has bequeathed to us an example of dying and rising again in spirit; and by his ascension he teaches us to raise ourselves in thought and desire to heaven, "confessing that we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth . . . seeking a country" (Heb. xi, 13, 14); "fellow-citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God" (Eph. ii, 19): "for," says the same apostle, "our conversation is in heaven." (Phil. iii, 20.)



## THE SEVENTH ARTICLE.

### 1. Which is the seventh article of the Creed ?

*“From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.”*

Jesus Christ is invested with three eminent offices : those of Redeemer, Advocate and Judge. In the preceding articles of the Creed we have seen that Christ redeemed the human race by his passion and death, and has undertaken the perpetual advocacy and patronage of our cause by his ascension into heaven. It next follows that, in this article, we set forth his character as Judge.

### 2. What does this article teach ?

*That Jesus Christ, at the end of the world, will come to judge all men.*

The Sacred Scriptures inform us that there is a two-fold coming of Christ. His first coming was when he came into the world as a little babe, and was born in a stable at Bethlehem. His coming then was in the midst of poverty, suffering and contempt. His second coming will be at the end of the world. “Ye men of Galilee,” said the angels to the apostles while yet gazing on the heavens where Christ had disappeared from their sight, “why stand ye looking up to heaven ? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven.” (Acts i, 11.) It is of the coming of our Lord at the end of the world that the angels spoke. His second coming will be with power,

majesty and glory, as he himself tells us in the Gospel: "Then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty." (Luke xxi, 27.)

This second coming is called in Scripture, "the day of the Lord:" "The day of the Lord," says the apostle, "shall so come as a thief in the night." (Thess. v, 2.) When the whole world shall be reduced to ashes, and all men, after having risen from the dead, shall be assembled in the valley of Josaphat, in order to be judged, "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven" (Matt. xxiv, 30); that is, the holy cross, more splendid than the sun: for the sun is darkened and concealed, but the cross appears: "Nor should it appear," says St. John Chrysostom, "were it not far more shining than the rays of the sun." (Hom. 76, in Matt.) Together with the sign of the cross, says St. Thomas, the other emblems of the passion shall be displayed, in order that the wicked, seeing him whom they pierced, may grieve and be tormented; and that they who have been redeemed, may rejoice at the glory of the Redeemer. (Opusc. 2, p. i, cap. 244.)

After the sign of the cross has appeared, Jesus Christ will come, and, according to the common opinion of the fathers of the Church, will take his seat above Mount Olivet, at the foot of which is the valley of Josaphat, in order that, according to the words of the angels to the apostles, he may be seen again on earth in the place from which he was seen ascending into heaven: "This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven." (Acts i, 11.)

Our Lord will come to judge in the form of man. "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with much power and majesty." (Matt. xxiv, 30.)

He will judge them in a glorified form, "with much power and majesty." Hence, at judgment, the body of Christ shall be more resplendent than the sun. In this form he will appear to the elect and to the reprobate; but the wicked shall not see the glory of his divinity, says St. Augustine. The wicked shall see him only in the form of the Son of man, but not in the form of God, in which he is equal to the Father. (L. i, de Trin., c. 13.) Jesus Christ will come seated on the clouds, which shall form a throne of majesty. He will come to judge men, accompanied by all the angels: "When the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty." (Matt. xxv, 31.)

Although the power of judging is common to all the persons of the blessed Trinity, yet it is especially attributed to the Son, because to him also, in a special manner, is ascribed wisdom. But our Lord himself has told us that he, as man, will judge the world: "The Father," he says, "hath given him (the Son) power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man." (John v, 27.) There is a peculiar propriety in Christ's sitting in judgment on this occasion, namely: that, as sentence is to be pronounced on mankind, they may see their Judge with their eyes, and hear him with their ears, and thus learn their final doom by means of the senses. Moreover, it is most just that he who was most iniquitously condemned by the judgment of men, should himself be afterwards seen by all men sitting in judgment on all. Hence the Prince of the Apostles says: "And he (Christ) has commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that this is he who was appointed of God to be the judge of the living and the dead." (Acts x, 42.)

The elect, however, shall not come with Jesus Christ from heaven, but shall, before his coming, resume their bodies, and with them shall be carried into the air to meet Christ. This is sufficiently clear from the words of St. Paul: "We," he says, "shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ." (1 Thess. iv, 16.) He says *with them*. In the preceding verse, the apostle says that "the Lord himself shall come down . . . with the trumpet of God, and the dead who are in Christ shall rise first." The dead, of whom it is said that *they shall rise first*, are, according to the opinion of interpreters, the saints, who, by a special privilege, are already in heaven with their glorified bodies, as is held of the divine Mother, of Henoch and Elias, and other fathers. These shall first come from heaven with Jesus Christ and the angels. The apostle afterwards adds: "Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them," etc. The apostle concludes the prophecy, saying to his disciples: "Wherefore comfort ye one another with these words." (Ibid. 17.) He wished that thus all who love God should console themselves, and take greater courage to serve him. With Christ will sit, first, the holy apostles to judge mankind, as is declared in the Gospel of St. Matthew (xix, 28): "You who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you shall also sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Secondly, there shall also be the apostolic men, who have followed and led the life of the apostles. Thirdly, the power of judging will also be extended, says St. Augustine, to all such faithful Christians as have led a perfect life: such as perfect religious, and others who have died in perfect virtue. And to show that this honor



shall be given, not only to the apostles, but also to others, our dear Saviour adds: "You shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." As in the number twelve he comprehended, not only all the Israelites, but all who shall be judged, so, by the twelve seats, we are, says St. Augustine, to understand that all those are admitted as judges to whom Jesus Christ shall give this honor. Some, therefore, says the holy doctor, shall preside as judges with the Lord, but others shall be judged. (De Civ., lib. 20, c. 5.)

### 3. What is this judgment called?

*The general, or last, judgment.*

This judgment is called the general judgment, because all men who have lived from the creation to the end of the world,—the just and the wicked, infants and adults, Christians and infidels, shall appear in judgment before Jesus Christ, to render an account of their life. "All nations," says Holy Scripture, "shall be gathered together before him." (Matt. xxv, 32.) The reason assigned by St. Thomas for the general judgment is, that to Christ as man was given the power of judging all men, as a reward of his humility, which made him obedient to the Father, even unto the death of the cross. Hence it is right that all men should see the glory of Jesus Christ in his human nature, in which he was appointed by the Father to judge the living and the dead. Although children, who have died before the use of reason, cannot give an account of good or evil, yet they will appear in judgment, says St. Thomas, "not to be judged like adults, by a previous examination, but to see the glory, and to witness the justice, of the divine Judge."

Bad Christians and infidels, though already judged and condemned, shall be examined and condemned. Bad Christians shall be judged, in order to make manifest the divine justice, which will show that they are excluded from a kingdom of which they externally appeared to be citizens ; infidels shall be judged, in order to show that they are justly condemned, because they would not become citizens of heaven.

#### 4. When will the day of judgment come ?

*“Of that day and hour no one knoweth ; no, not the angels of heaven.”* (Matt. xxiv, 36.)

The general judgment will take place immediately after the general resurrection. But when will the general resurrection take place ? St. Alphonsus answers : It will take place before the end of the world, as is evident from the Scriptures, and as Jesus Christ has attested with regard to the faithful : “That every one,” says he, “who seeth the Son (that is, by faith) and believeth in him, may have life everlasting ; and I will raise him up in the last day.” (John vi, 40.) And St. Matthew says : “The harvest is the end of the world.” (Matt. xiii, 39.) By the word harvest is meant the time of the general resurrection, when each person shall reap the fruit of the good or evil he has sown in his life. Although we know that the general resurrection will take place before the end of the world, yet the time itself is altogether unknown until the day of judgment, and this day, says St. Alphonsus, shall be also perfectly unknown until it arrives. Hence St. Thomas says that this time cannot be known even by revelation, because God wishes it to be perfectly unknown, and therefore he has concealed it even from the apostles.

When the apostles sought to know it, Jesus Christ answered: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in his own power." (Acts i, 7.) On another occasion he went so far as to say that even he himself did not know it: "But of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father." (Mark xiii, 32.) Christ, of course, was not ignorant of that time, because he had received from God the knowledge of all things, past and future; still, as theologians say, he did not receive from God this knowledge of the day of judgment, in which to be able to reveal it to others. Hence he said that no man knoweth, neither the angels, nor the Son, in order to remove from all men the desire of knowing that time, the knowledge of which is reserved to God alone.

"Neither can we," says St. Alphonsus, "infer the time of the last judgment from the signs described in the Scriptures; for we cannot know when all these signs shall take place." Hence St. Thomas says that all those who have endeavored to fix the time of the complete accomplishment of those signs, have been deceived. Theologians, therefore, say that we ought to reject the opinions of St. Justin, St. Irenæus, St. Hilary, St. Jerome, Lactantius, who hold that the world should not last longer than six thousand years. What is certain is that which Jesus Christ has said: "Of that hour no man knoweth," etc. Hence St. Thomas rejects all the conjectures regarding the time of the last judgment which others have been led, by various reasons, to make. ("Mor. Dissert.")

Hence Leo X, in the fifth Lateran Council, has forbidden any one to fix the time of the coming of Antichrist or of the general judgment. (Sess. 11.) Although the Lord has

wisely left us in ignorance about the time of the last judgment, he has vouchsafed to give us signs which will precede it.

The first sign of the end of the world will be the general preaching of the gospel all over the world, according to the prediction of Jesus Christ: "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come." (Matt. xxiv, 14.) From this passage, St. Augustine, St. John Damascene, St. Cyril, St. Gregory, St. Thomas, Bede, and many other fathers of the Church, argue that the universal preaching of the gospel will be a sign which must necessarily precede the destruction of the world. Father Francis Suarez (tom. 17, disp. 56, sect. 1) very justly says that this opinion should be held, because the words, "And then shall the consummation come," should be rigorously understood of the consummation of the world, which is to succeed the general preaching of the gospel; for the word consummation, in the strict sense, signifies the destruction of the world: and this interpretation, says St. Alphonsus, is strengthened by the consideration that it is probable that the gospel will not be preached in all parts of the earth until the end of the world. For it is said that this preaching will be "for a testimony to all nations;" and Jesus Christ will certainly wish that all men may have heard the faith preached before the general judgment, in order thus to be without excuse.

The second sign will be the general apostasy, or abandonment of the faith, into which, according to St. Paul, Christians will fall: "Now the Spirit manifestly saith that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to the spirits of error and the doctrines of devils."



(1 Tim. iv, 1.) In another place the same apostle says that the day shall not come, "unless there come a revolt first." (2 Thess. ii, 3.) This revolt, says St. Thomas, will consist in the apostasy from the faith, and in the rejection of the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. This is confirmed by St. Leo. St. Augustine observes that this apostasy must precede the coming of Antichrist: and he adds that, though all will not forsake the faith, yet a few only will retain it.

The third sign will be the total destruction of the name and empire of Rome, indicated in the seventh chapter of the Prophet Daniel, where he speaks of the fourth beast, by which the fathers of the Church understand the Roman empire, which shall then be destroyed.

The fourth sign will be the coming of Antichrist. He will come during the great apostasy from the faith, as appears from the words of St. Paul: "Unless there come a revolt first." He then adds: "And the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Of Antichrist we have already spoken in the first part of volume i, pp. 183-192.

The fifth sign will be the coming of Henoch and Elias, who are still alive. Of Henoch, St. Paul says: "By faith Henoch was translated that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had translated him: before his translation he had testimony that he pleased God." (Heb. xi, 5.) And of Elias it is written: "And as they went on walking and talking together, behold a fiery chariot and fiery horses parted them both asunder: and Elias went up by a whirlwind into heaven." (4 Kings ii, 11.) These two saints, Henoch and Elias, will endeavor, by their preaching and miracles, to repair the havoc which Antichrist, by his tyranny and delusions, shall have caused in the Church. (See Volume I, Part I, pp. 186-192.) The fruit of their

preaching will be the confirmation of the faithful and the conversion of the infidels, and especially of the Jews. At the end of their mission, Henoch and Elias shall be killed by Antichrist, and their bodies shall lie for three days unburied in the streets of Jerusalem. (Apoc. xi, 7-9.) After three days and a half they shall rise from the dead, and then shall be called up to heaven by a loud voice, and shall be taken up in a cloud in the sight of their enemies. All this we learn from St. John. (Apoc. xi, 11, 12.)

But the certain signs which immediately precede the last judgment are those which were foretold by Jesus Christ, who, after having spoken of the persecution of Antichrist, says: "And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven; and upon earth there shall be distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves: men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world, for the powers of heaven shall be moved." (Matt. xxiv, 29.)

Another time, our Lord showed, in a vision, to St. John the Evangelist what was to happen at the end of the world. "And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders," says St. John, "and there was a great earthquake, such an one as never had been since men were upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail like a talent came down from heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God for the plague of the hail: because it was exceeding great." (Apoc. xvi, 18, 20, 21.)

St. Peter the Apostle adds: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with

great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat ; and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up." (2 Ep., Peter iii, 10.)

And long before, the Lord had sketched out to us the outlines of that tremendous day by the Prophet Isaias : " With breaking shall the earth be broken ; with crushing shall the earth be crushed ; with trembling shall the earth be moved ; with shaking shall the earth be shaken, as a drunken man, and shall be removed, as the tent of one night ; . . . and it shall fall, and shall not rise again." (Isa. xxiv, 19, 20.)

Here are most dreadful disasters foretold. They will be the forerunners of the general dissolution of the world, to announce the last terrible judgment, and to admonish mankind to prepare for it. The simple description of those dreadful events strikes us with terror. The heavens will echo with the loudest thunder ; the sky will be rent in every part with most dreadful flashes of lightning ; the whole air will resound with horrible voices or noises. The earth will be shaken from its foundations with an earthquake such as never has been felt before, nor has ever entered into man's mind to imagine. Such will be the general concussion caused by this earthquake, that all the islands immediately vanish , and of the mountains, some will tumble to pieces and be levelled with the surface of the earth ; others will burst out into volcanoes, and by their internal fire be dissolved and melted into a fluid. Then will follow a storm of hail infinitely exceeding what had ever been heard of or known. The hailstones will be of the weight of a talent,—that is, of four-score pounds. The sun will darken to such a degree that it will appear as though covered with black haircloth, and the moon will

reddden like blood. The stars will seem to fall from the heavens as thick as green figs are shaken from the trees in a hurricane of wind ; the sky will appear to fold up like a roll of parchment. The whole fabric of the world will be unhinged and fall to pieces. All will be confusion, wreck, and ruin. At the sight of such events, what wonder if the wicked of every rank and denomination run to hide themselves for fear, and, from consciousness of their guilt, suspect that the Great Day has arrived, and that the Almighty is coming to judgment, causing them to wish that the mountains and rocks may fall upon them, to shelter them from the face of the angry God and from the wrath of the Lamb ! But, strange to think, notwithstanding such an awful catastrophe, many of the wicked will remain obstinate in their evil dispositions, and, refusing in those last moments to turn their hearts to repentance and sue for pardon, will complete their impiety by blaspheming God for the calamities which they suffer, and which they have done their share to call down upon themselves. As all mankind are sentenced to die, those who are not carried off by the disasters just mentioned, will be despatched by the fire which will go before the Son of man when he comes to judgment.

#### **5. What are the things which Christ will judge ?**

*All our thoughts, words, works, and omissions.*

At the examination of accounts which takes place at the last judgment in a spiritual manner and in silence, Jesus Christ, who has a clear and distinct knowledge of the whole life of every individual, will, in a moment, recall to the memory of every man all his thoughts, words, and actions ; he will remind him of the good he has received



from God ; of the good he could have done, but omitted to do through culpable negligence ; of the evils which he has committed, and of the evil for which he is responsible ; of the evil of which he has approved, and of the evil of which he has not repented ; of the evil in which he has been an accomplice, and of the evil of which he has been the occasion ; of the evil which he has caused, either by his counsel, or by his consent, or by his command, or by his suggestion and will, or by his flatteries, or by his negligence, or by his assistance, or by his support, or by his example, and by the scandal he has given. "I say unto you," says Jesus Christ, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment." (Matt. xii, 36.)

#### 6. Where will Christ judge ?

*In the valley of Josaphat, where the good will be placed on his right hand, and the wicked on his left. (Joel iii, 2.)*

As to the place of the general judgment, the common opinion is that it will be the valley of Josaphat, which lies between the walls of Jerusalem and Mount Olivet. In Joel it is written: "I will gather together all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Josaphat ; and I will plead with them there." (Joel iii, 2.) In the twelfth verse we read: "Let them arise, and let the nations come up into the valley of Josaphat: for there I will sit to judge all nations round about." It is certainly right that Jesus Christ should descend to accomplish the last work in the place in which he consummated the work of redemption.

Some one may ask, How can this valley contain so many millions of men who shall be judged on the last day ? "I

answer," says St. Alphonsus, "we do not say that all men shall be contained within the boundaries of the valley; we only say that Jesus Christ shall hold the last judgment, standing on a lofty eminence above the valley: for the Prophet Joel writes: 'There will I sit to judge all nations round about.' The Lord, then, will sit in the valley of Josaphat, so that he shall be seen by all: the elect shall be raised in the air, and shall stand on his right; and the reprobate shall be on his left in the valley, and in the adjoining places."

### 7. What will Christ say to the good?

*"Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom which is prepared for you."*

When all nations and peoples, from Adam to the last child born on earth, are gathered together in the valley of Josaphat, on the east side of Jerusalem, the heavens will open, and the blessed cross, the sign of the redemption, will shine in the air. Beautiful and consoling sight to the good Catholic, but horrible sight to the damned! "Ha!" the sinner shrieks, "there is the sign of the cross. That is the sign I have so often insulted and blasphemed; I have called it Popish superstition; I have trampled it under foot; and now it is revered by angels and saints, it is honored by God himself. That cross was crimsoned for my sake with the blood of a God. It should be the source of my hope, and now it is only an object of terror to me. It proves too clearly the justice of all my torments. I was marked with its seal in baptism, and yet my feelings towards it were rather those of a Jew or a heathen than a Christian. By my sins I have nailed Him to the cross who is now to be my Judge."

And now a light more brilliant still, brighter than a thousand suns, illumines the sky. Upon the refulgent clouds of heaven appears One who is like unto the Son of man. He is more beautiful than the morning-star. He is clothed with majesty and glory; he is surrounded by myriads of angels. It is Jesus, the Son of God, the Judge of the living and the dead.

Millions and millions of angels and archangels accompany him. He seats himself on the judgment-seat, where every eye beholds him. On his right hand sits his blessed Mother, the Queen of heaven. Around him, on thrones, are seated the twelve apostles. Who can imagine the joy of the elect when they behold the ravishing beauty of Jesus? In the transports of their joy they fly into the air, they soar aloft like eagles. With trembling rapture they adore the footstool of their Saviour and God! They are called and placed on the right of the judgment-seat; and on the left are the wicked, awaiting their final doom. It is the evening of that day,—the last evening that will ever be. The examination has been made, and the final separation taken place. Jesus is about to pronounce the last sentence; he turns to those on his right, and addresses them in words that bring eternal joy and happiness to their souls. He smiles upon them; and, as he smiles, he pours into their hearts the torrent of his delights. What transports fill those blessed souls! Already, already their labors and sufferings are abundantly repaid. For, let us imagine, if we can, what it is to behold the face of God looking with complacency on us; to behold the gates of heaven thrown open before us; to behold the numberless multitudes of angels, our future companions, looking upon us with looks of love, and with extended arms ready to bear us away to the mansions of heaven.

That blessed moment has come at last. Their loving Saviour stretches out his arms towards them, and, after a glorious rehearsal of all their good works, "then shall the King say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Come from this valley of tears, where you have long mourned, and enter your heavenly country, where tears shall be no more, and where grief shall be turned into joy. Come from a land of exile to your true country; come from your mortal pilgrimage, in the midst of crosses, labors, conflicts, and dangers, to your blessed and happy home, in the fair and lovely mansions of rest and peace in the eternal Jerusalem. Come, no longer to carry your crown of disappointment and of affliction, but to receive the rewards of your patience and labors. Arise, and come to take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

The song of exultation and triumph shall instantly burst from the lips of that glorious assembly.

### 8. What did Christ say to the wicked?

*"Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devils and his angels." (Matt. xxv, 41.)*

After having invited the just to enter into his kingdom, Jesus Christ will turn to the wicked on his left hand, and with fire in his eyes and terror in his countenance, he will pronounce against them the dreadful sentence of their eternal doom. Every word of that last sentence will make the valley of Josaphat resound with shrieks, groans, and lamentations: "Depart from me, ye accursed, into ever-



lasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

"Depart from me, ye accursed!" I, your Creator, your Redeemer, now break forever all the ties of love that bound you to me. Depart from me, your Creator. I formed you in mine own image. I created you to be sharers in my happiness, to be the heirs of my heavenly kingdom. For your sake I called into being the great universe. I filled you with graces and blessings, and had blessings greater still in store for you, had you remained faithful. But you repaid all my love with insult, all my favors with ingratitude. I loved you so dearly that I wept and suffered, and even shed my heart's blood for you upon the gibbet of the cross, and for all my love you returned only coldness or hatred: you hated me, the source of all blessings. You loved malediction, and malediction shall be yours. I then give you my curse this day, here in the presence of angels and of men. This curse shall surround you like a garment; it shall enter like oil into the very marrow of your bones. "*Discedite a me, maledicti*"—"Depart from me, ye accursed!" And the fearful curse resounds throughout the vault of heaven; it penetrates to the deepest depths of hell; it reëchoes again and again like the roar of mighty thunder. Woe! woe! malediction!

"*Discedite, maledicti!*" Depart into that abode of sorrow and despair where the worm shall never die, and the fire shall never quench. Depart into the abode of endless despair, where there is no hope—no, not even the hope of death! During life you served the devil and his angels; you calumniated the virtuous, you led others into sin, you ruined innocent souls. Depart, then, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Depart from me, and bear my curse with you. A curse upon your eyes, never to see the least glimpse of light ; a curse upon your ears, to hear no other sounds for all eternity than the shrieks and groans of the damned ; a curse in your taste, to be ever imbittered with the gall of dragons ; a curse on your smell, to be always tormented with the intolerable stench of the bottomless abyss ; a curse on your feeling, and on all the members of your body, to be forever burning in a fire that shall never be quenched. I abandon you now and for evermore to be the objects of my wrath, of my malediction, of my everlasting hatred.

The unhappy sinner raises his eyes and beholds for the last time the glorious assembly of the blessed. He sees among them the friends and relatives whom he knew and loved so well on earth. He sees there a loving brother and sister, a fond father and mother. He must leave them forever. The unhappy mother looks up and beholds among the blessed her own dear child, who had so often slept on her bosom. She must now leave him forever. The damned look up to heaven, whose golden portals now open to the blessed, but shall never, never open to them. "O paradise!" they cry,—“O paradise, O home of the blessed, paradise of delights ! you are not for me ! O God of beauty, unutterable loveliness ! must I leave thee forever ? Farewell, Father of mercies ! we are thy children no longer. Farewell, O Jesus ! we are no longer thy brethren. Farewell, O adorable Redeemer ! thou didst die for me, but thy blood was shed for me in vain. Farewell, O Holy Spirit, Spirit of love ! we by our sins have caused your love to turn to hate. Farewell, O Mary ! you were once my mother, I may never call you mother

again. Farewell, my angel guardian! you watched over me so faithfully, now you can assist me no longer. Farewell, my patron saints! you shall pray for me no longer."

The last farewell is over, and the condemned soul is in hell. "Oh! had I given myself in earnest to God," will be its thought; "had I but earnestly tried to serve God, as I was so often urged to do by his graces, how much happier would my life on earth have been, and how different my eternal lot! If only one hour were now allowed me for repentance! but the hour of repentance is past! 'Out of hell there is no redemption.' Ah! cursed be the power that created me! cursed be the mercy that redeemed me! cursed be the day on which I first saw the light! cursed be the air I breathed! cursed be the mother that bore me! cursed be God and cursed be man! It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Almighty!"

Whilst these unhappy souls are uttering their curses and bewailing their loss, a whirlwind of fire and flames envelops them, the bottomless pit yawns beneath their feet, a wild, confused shout, mingled with wailing, shrieks, and blasphemies, is heard—and all is over. The mouth of the bottomless pit is sealed forever with the seal of justice of the omnipotent God, who holds in his hands the key of death and hell. And "the wicked shall go into everlasting fire, and the just into everlasting life:"

"Heaven to these, and quenchless light;  
Hell to those, and rayless night."

These two sentences regard those who, after having attained the use of reason, have done good or evil works, by which they have merited a sentence of eternal life or of eternal death. This appears from the following words:

"For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat," etc. And again: "For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat."

But what will become of infants and incurable maniacs who have died without baptism, and only with the guilt of original sin? St. Alphonsus answers: "Although infants have performed no works by their own will, they have performed actions by the will of others. It is said in the Gospel: 'He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.'" (Mark xvi, 16.) On these words St. Augustine remarks (Epist. 207 ad Vit., cap. 8), that as an infant believes through others (that is, through the sponsors who answer for the infant), and is thus baptized, without having the use of reason, and shall be admitted to glory, so, on the other hand, when others neglect their duty, and leave an infant without baptism, the child shall be excluded from heaven and shall be condemned. But how can a person be condemned without his own fault? St. Thomas answers that "he shall be condemned for the sin of the first parent." (Lect. in c. 5, ep. 2, ad Cor.) Several fathers of the Church, St. Jerome, St. Gregory, and others, are of the opinion that, for infants dying without baptism, the torments of eternal misery are prepared; for, there is, they say, no middle place in which they can be placed. Those who are not on the right, are undoubtedly on the left. Therefore, those who are not admitted into the kingdom, are certainly sent into eternal fire.

St. Thomas, however, in several parts of his works, holds that infants dying without baptism will not suffer the pain of sense and of the loss of the beatific vision; and that they will even enjoy natural beatitude. There are some who hold that the earth, after its renovation, shall



be inhabited by the infants who died without baptism, and that they shall enjoy the delights of the purified elements.

Thus, says St. Alphonsus, "three general sentences will be pronounced orally by Jesus Christ on those who are judged: one, by which the just are admitted into heaven; another, by which the wicked are sent to hell; and again another, by which infants who have died before the use of reason and without baptism, are excluded from glory. Besides these three general sentences, there will be innumerable particular sentences regarding each one of the elect and of the reprobate; for, according to their merits or demerits, the elect will be rewarded with different degrees of glory, and the reprobate will be punished with different degrees of pain. But, as St. Thomas and others say, these particular sentences will not be expressed in words by Jesus Christ, for that would require too much time; but the reward or punishment decreed for every one will be made known to him in a spiritual manner. And this, they say, will be done either by the divine power, or by their own conscience declaring to every one his lot, or by the assessors of Jesus Christ in judgment, who shall communicate to each individual the sentence which Jesus Christ has pronounced upon him.

### 9. Why will there be a general judgment?

*1, That God's wisdom and justice may be acknowledged by all men; 2, that Jesus Christ may be glorified before the whole world; 3, that the good may be honored, and the wicked confounded, as they have deserved.*

1. According to St. Thomas, there will be a general judgment, in order that the divine justice, which is at present often concealed, may then be revealed to all. For

God treats some, for the benefit of others, in a manner different from that in which they, by their works, deserve to be treated : many sinners prosper, and many saints live in affliction, so that the just cannot be distinguished from the wicked. And although after death each person shall receive the reward or punishment which he deserves, yet this is not known to others. Now, in order that all may know all the arrangements of divine justice, these arrangements must be made manifest to all at the end of the world. By the divine power, each person will see by a simple glance all that is contained in the book of his conscience, and will know the goodness or the malice of all his actions, and, in seeing them, will receive from the Judge the sentence of eternal life or of eternal death.

But each person will see not only his own works in his conscience, but will also see, in the consciences of the good and of the bad, all their deeds. This, says St. Thomas, is necessary, in order that each person may see the justice of the Judge, as well in his rewards as in his punishments. Were the sins of the elect not to be revealed, the efficacy of their repentance could not be known ; and this would be injurious to the glory of the saints, and to the divine clemency which has rescued them from perdition. It cannot be objected that the publication of the sins of the saints would be to them a cause of great shame, from which our Lord appears desirous to save them ; for, according to St. Thomas, the manifestation of their sins will redound to the greater glory and consolation of the saints, because it will be made manifest that they have merited the reward which God bestows upon them. "There is laid up for me," says St. Paul, "a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day ; and not

only to me, but to them also that love his coming." (2 Tim. iv, 8.) On that day, the reward or punishment assigned to each person shall be known not only to himself, but shall, along with his works, be revealed by the divine power to all men. "No one," says St. Augustine, "can then complain that the wicked have been happy, and that the just have been miserable in this life; for then shall appear the true happiness, which the saints have deserved, and the real misery to which the wicked have voluntarily condemned themselves." (Lib. xx, de Civ. Dei, c. 1.)

It may be asked here: Will not the just who have died in the state of grace feel extreme grief at the remembrance of their sins? St. Thomas answers, that in this life he who loves God cannot but feel a great sorrow for having offended him; but in the land of bliss the joy of the saints will be so great that it will leave no room for sadness in the soul. As the recollection of the perils to which the soldier has been exposed adds to his joy, so the remembrance of the divine mercy shown to the soul in the pardon of all her sins, and in the delivery from hell, shall even increase her gladness.

2. Moreover, the justice of God requires that his divine Son himself, so despised and suffering and abject among men, should, on the day of general judgment, be glorified in the sight of his enemies, and be exalted by his heavenly Father in proportion to his sufferings and ignominies. Hence he said to the High-Priest Caiphas, when he sought to condemn him to death: "Hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matt. xxvi, 64.)

3. Finally, a general judgment is necessary, in order that the good may be separated from the bad, and that

the one may be rewarded and the other may be condemned publicly, in the face of all mankind. It is also necessary to increase the glory of the elect and the confusion of the reprobate, in proportion to their respective good and evil works; because it is only on that day that, stript of all disguise, the character of every one shall be clearly laid open to public view. On that day, the good man, who performed acts of charity in secret, shall be known to all such as he really was. On that day, the false friend shall be detected, the concealed slanderer and detractor exposed, the secret adulterer, the treacherous enemy, the hypocritical pretender, be all brought to light. On that day, the just shall obtain an additional reward in the praise which they shall receive; and the wicked shall suffer an additional punishment in the public praise of the saints. Hence the Holy Scripture describes the wicked as groaning with anguish of spirit, and saying at the last day, when they behold the glory of the just: "These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints." (Wisd. v, 1-5.)

**10. Will not every man be judged at his death, as well as on the last day?**

*Yes: "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." (Heb. ix, 27.)*

The hour of death is, in the history of every immortal soul, the hour which is of all others the most important, the most awful. In that hour the veil of eternity is drawn aside, and the soul stands for the first time trembling and



alone in the presence of her Maker. Two eternities are before her : the one an eternity of happiness, the other an eternity of woe. In the very moment after death, in the very chamber of death, whilst the friends are dressing the body for the grave, whilst they are closing the eyes, and bandaging the mouth, and arranging the limbs in order for burial, the soul has heard her eternal doom pronounced—to heaven or to hell.

If the soul is adjudged to heaven, she shall be forever happy ; if she is doomed to hell, all the prayers in the world can benefit her nothing. This decisive moment shall come for every one of us, and it is our most sacred duty to prepare well for it while we have yet time.

St. John Climachus tells the story of an old hermit who fell dangerously ill. Some hours before his death, he seemed to be beside himself. He glanced fearfully around on every side, like one who is surrounded by enemies. The dying man imagined himself before a tribunal, answering accusations brought against him. The bystanders saw no one, but they heard distinctly what was said. "It is true," said the hermit, "that I committed that sin ; but I confessed it, and fasted three years for it on bread and water. . . . That is true, too : I acknowledge it. But I confessed it, and did penance for it. As for that other sin, I did not commit it, and you accuse me falsely. . . . There, I have no excuse to offer—I am guilty of that sin · but I throw myself on the mercy of God."

The rigorous account which was demanded of this old hermit in the hour of his death is sufficient to alarm us all. Which of us has led a life of penance for forty years ? All of us, it is true, can say, "I have committed such and such a sin ;" but which of us can say with the hermit, "I

have confessed it, and fasted three years for it on bread and water"? Which of us, then, can flatter himself with having no reason to fear the judgment of God?

### **11. What is this judgment called?**

*The particular judgment.*

The judgment which takes place immediately after death is called the particular judgment, because it is passed upon every man in particular. "It is easy before God," says Holy Scripture, "in the *day of death*, to reward *every one* according to his ways. . . . And in the end of a man is the disclosing of his works." (Ecclus. xi, 28, 29.) The fathers and theologians teach that at this judgment the angel guardian will assist as advocate, and the devil as accuser. However, all will be completed in an instant, or, as St. Augustine says, "with wonderful celerity." (De Civit. Dei, lib. xx, cap. 14.) For, Jesus Christ as man has a full knowledge of our works: he neither requires time nor witnesses in order to examine them. Each person who is judged, shall, by the divine operation, know at a glance all the good and evil he has done.

### **12. Whither do souls go after the particular judgment?**

1, *Those who die perfectly innocent or penitent, go to heaven*; 2, *those who die in mortal sin, go to hell*; 3, *those who die in venial sin, or without having fully satisfied God's justice, go to purgatory.*

1. "Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. vii, 21.) In these words, our divine Saviour means to say that no one, whosoever he may be, and whatsoever exterior good works he may

perform for his name's sake, shall be admitted to the glory of life everlasting, if he has not performed all, according to his will. Let us now imagine a soul on the point of leaving this world in perfect charity with God,—a soul that has spent her life in perfect conformity to the holy commandments of God. That soul, no doubt, will immediately be admitted into the presence and enjoyment of God ; for Jesus Christ assures us that “the clean of heart shall see God.” (Matt. v, 8.) Such a soul was St. Scholastica. Hence, after her death, her soul was seen by St. Benedict, her brother, to go up to heaven in the shape of a dove. The good thief on the cross died perfectly penitent ; hence he heard Christ say to him : To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise. The robe of such a soul is whiter than snow, and on her head she wears a glittering crown. O how beautiful is such a soul ! So marvellously beautiful is the soul clothed with the light of glory that, could we but gaze on her, we should die of joy ; for she is now, indeed, the image and likeness of the living God. Let us follow this pure soul as she rises from the earth, and passes through the countless myriads of stars and planets that light up her pathway to heaven.

O how new and wonderful is the delight which the soul experiences as she rises from the earth ! How great and overflowing, then, must be her joy as she beholds at one glance, not only the whole earth, but all the mysteries of the universe, which were never yet revealed to mortal man ! In the fulness of her joy she bursts forth into a canticle of praise and gladness ; and her song, like that of the lark, rings louder and more gladsome the higher she ascends : for, all she sees is hers, and shall be hers forever.

As the soul draws nigh to the glittering portals of the heavenly city, the gates are thrown open, and all heaven rejoices at her coming. "Who is this," the angels ask,—“who is this that cometh up from the earth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?” The guardian angel answers: “This is the bride of the Lamb.” Then all heaven resounds with the sweetest melody, and all the angels sing: “Blessed are they that are called to the marriage of the Lamb.”

The Queen of Saba quitted her native land, and travelled for many long, weary days, to gaze upon the splendors of Solomon's court. She entered the royal halls; she admired the beauty of the palace, the costly magnificence of the furniture, and the unwonted splendor, the perfect harmony, of all around her. She listened, entranced, to the sublime wisdom of the august monarch of that court, and she was so overcome with joy and wonder at all that she saw and heard, that she could not speak, she could not move, she could not breathe—she swooned away in an ecstasy of delight. At length, in coming to herself again, she exclaimed: “O glorious Monarch! I have heard great things of thy magnificence, thy wisdom,—so great that I could not believe them; but now that I have seen with my own eyes, that I have heard with my own ears, now I confess to you, I assure you, that all that I have heard and seen is far below the reality.”

Such, too, will be the language of a soul on her first entrance into heaven; such, and far greater, will be her joy, her surprise, her ecstatic delight, in entering the abode of the blessed. “O sweet Jesus!” she will exclaim, “I have heard wonderful things of thy kingdom, thy glory, thy beauty; I could scarcely believe, or rather I



could not understand, them all; but, oh! now I can see how infinitely below the truth was all that I have heard!"

Kings, queens, princes, emperors and thousands of young men and young women, have renounced the world, shut themselves up in convents and in solitude to preserve their baptismal innocence, or to do true penance for all their sins, and thus make sure of eternal life. And heaven was worth all this, and more too; for St. Paul has said with truth: "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."

2. If, on the contrary, a soul leaves this world in disgrace with God, and dead to him by the guilt of mortal sin, that soul will undoubtedly be condemned to hell. The soul, at the moment of its separation from the body, naturally gravitates towards its centre. If in a state of deadly sin, or with a will wholly opposed to the Divine will, it goes to its appointed place, carried there by the very nature of sin—of a perverse will. It is this perverse will of man that constitutes sin; and the guilt of sin cannot be effaced from the soul while it is under the dominion of that evil will. So God is obliged to withhold his goodness from such a soul, and let it remain in a fixed state of despair and malignity—let it go to the place towards which it gravitates,—to hell, assigned it for its destination.

As the soul departed this life with a perverse will, its guilt could not be washed away, and now cannot be, because death has rendered its will unchangeable. The soul is forever fixed in a state of good or evil, according to the disposition of the will at the moment of death. Wherefore it is written, *Ubi te invenero*; that is to say, wherever I find thee at the hour of death—with a will to

sin or to repent of sin—*ibi te judicabo*, there will I judge thee; and from this judgment there is no appeal; because, all freedom of choice ceasing with life, the soul must remain unalterably fixed in the state of damnation in which death finds it. “Wherever the tree falleth, there it shall lie.” As she can no more repent, her sin can never be forgiven, it will always remain; and on this account she continues to be forever a subject of punishment. St. Francis once gave a great mission in the town of Naples. Several nights before the mission he went through the streets to every house. He knocked at each door as he went on, and when it was opened, he said: “Please, for the love of God, to come to the mission.” In a certain house in one of the streets, there was living a very wicked woman: her name was Catharine. St. Francis came to the door of Catharine’s house, and when it was opened, he said: “Please, for the love of God, to come to the mission.” Catharine answered: “No, I will not go to the mission.” St. Francis then left the house. The next evening St. Francis came again to Catharine’s house, and knocked at the door. The door was opened. “How is Catharine?” said St. Francis. “Catharine,” a voice answered,—“Catharine is dead!” “Then,” said St. Francis, “let us go upstairs and see the dead body.” They all walked upstairs, and went to the room where the dead body was lying on a bed. They stood round the dead body. St. Francis stood in front of it, and looked at the pale body. Then he said in a loud voice: “O Catharine, Catharine! you that would not come to the mission, tell me,—in the name of God I command you to tell me,—where are you, where is your soul?” A moment passed, and the body opened its mouth. The dead tongue moved in the inside of the

mouth. That dead tongue answered the question of St. Francis, and said in a frightful voice: "*I am in hell.*"

Now, when a soul enters hell, condemned by the judgment of God, the devil executes the judgment. For, as he is king of hell, so he is also judge. He fixes in hell the place where the soul is to be, the manner of her torment, and the instruments of that torment. St. Frances of Rome saw souls going into hell after they had been condemned by the judgment of God. They went there with letters of fire written on their foreheads: "He shall make all, both little and great, have a character on their forehead." (Apoc. xii.) The letters showed the names of the sins for which they had been condemned to hell, such as blaspheming, or impurity, or stealing, or drunkenness, or not hearing Mass on Sundays, or not going to the sacraments, and so forth. As soon as one of these souls came to the gates of hell, the devils went and seized hold of her. But how do the devils take hold of these souls? As the lions in Babylon took hold of those who were thrown into their den. When the people were cast over the wall into the den, the lions opened their jaws and roared, and caught the people in their jaws and crushed them, even before they had fallen to the ground. So is a soul received when she enters hell. The devils carry away the soul, bear her through the flames, and set her down before the great monster, Lucifer, to be judged by him who has no mercy. Oh! that horrible face of the devil! He opens his mouth, he delivers the tremendous sentence, which all hear, and hell rings with shouts of spiteful joy and mockery at the unfortunate soul.

The soul is then snatched away and hurried to that place which is to be her home for ever and ever. All

around her are devils, some to strike, others to mock. And the stroke of the devil may be learned from the story of Job: "Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with a grievous ulcer from the sole of his foot to the top of his head. Then Job took a tile and scraped off the corrupt matter, sitting on a dunghill. Now, when Job's friends heard all the evil that had come upon him, they came to him. For they had made an appointment to come together and visit and comfort him. And crying, they wept and sprinkled dust on their heads. And they sat down with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights. And no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great." (Job ii.)

The devil gave Job but one stroke: that one stroke was so terrible that it covered all his body with sores and ulcers, making him look so frightful that his friends did not know him again. That one stroke was so terrible that for seven days and seven nights his friends did not speak a word, but sat crying, and wondering and thinking what a terrible stroke the devil can give. But the soul that has been condemned eternally to hell has, on one side, a devil to strike her. He will strike her every minute for ever and ever without stopping. In what condition, then, will her body be after the devil has been striking it every moment for millions and millions of years?

But one comfort Job had: when the devil had struck him, his friends came to visit and console him, and when they saw him they wept. But in hell there will be no one to come to visit and comfort and sympathize with the soul: neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister, nor friend, will ever come to console those who have once entered there.



Besides the striking devil, the soul has also another devil to mock at and reproach her. "Remember," says the mocking devil to the soul, "where you are, and where you will be forever; how short the sin was, how long the punishment. It is your own fault. When you committed that mortal sin, you knew how you would be punished. What a good bargain you made to take the pains of eternity in exchange for the sin of a day, an hour, a moment! You cry now for your sin, but your crying comes too late. You liked bad company: you will find bad company enough here. Behold all the evil spirits, declared enemies of God and man, who in hell have power from God to tear and torment the damned as much as they like. They are your companions for ever and ever."

One day a demon, by the mouth of a possessed person, spoke these terrible words: "When a soul, after leaving the body, is given up to us, we know all the circumstances of the case: and this is necessary, for we are the executors of his sentence; we know all the causes of his condemnation, that we may be able to impress upon him more forcibly the causes of his eternal woe. We represent to him the graces received, the occasions of salvation offered him, the laws of God which he could, but would not, observe, and at the same time we overwhelm him with torments. When some souls, after having tasted the sweetness of divine love, become lukewarm, and at last fall into hell, there is a special demon perpetually beside them to remind them of the favors they once received but abused."

Did you ever see two deadly vipers fly at each other? Their eyes burn with rage; they shoot out their poisoned stings; they struggle to give each other the death-blow.

They struggle till they have torn the flesh and blood from each other. The like of this happens in hell. There you may see bad children, in dreadful anger, beating their parents; they fly at them; they try to take life away from those who gave them life. "Cursed parents!" they shout, "if you had not given us bad example, we should not now be in hell." "Accursed father!" cries a son, "it was you who showed me the way to the public-house." "Accursed mother!" cries a daughter, "it was you who taught me to love the world. You never warned me when I went into that company which was my ruin." "Cursed husband!" cries that wife, "before I knew you, I was good; I obeyed the laws of God; it was you who led me away from God, and made me break his laws. Like the devil, you ruined my soul, and, like the devil, I will torment you for ever and ever." See in hell that young man and young woman: how changed they are! They loved each other so much on earth that for this they broke the laws of God and man; but now they fight each other like two vipers, and so will continue to fight for all eternity.

3. Those who die in venial sin, or without having fully satisfied God's justice, go to purgatory. There are two classes of souls that go to purgatory: those that depart this life in unforgiven venial sin, and those that have not fully paid the debt of temporal punishment due to the justice of God for the sins, mortal or venial, the guilt of which has been forgiven. When God forgives the guilt of a sin, he does not always remit the whole of the *punishment*. The principal punishment due to every mortal sin, namely, the eternal flames of hell, he always forgives when he forgives the sin and restores the soul to his grace: for no one can be at the same time a child

of God and a child of hell. But, as a good father, when he forgives a child, often inflicts some slight punishment, partly as an atonement for the fault committed, and partly as a warning for the future, so does Almighty God, in forgiving us the guilt and eternal punishment of sin, usually leave upon us some lesser chastisement to be endured either in this life or in purgatory. This punishment is called *temporal*, because it will end after a time ; while that which will never end, namely, the punishment of hell, is called *eternal*. In reading Holy Scripture, we find many instances of the infliction of this temporal punishment upon the repentant sinner, after the guilt and eternal punishment had been forgiven him by God. Thus Adam, our first parent, having grievously offended God by eating of the forbidden fruit, became afterwards, as is commonly believed, a sincere penitent ; yet the sentence remained unchanged, that in labor and toil he should eat his bread all the days of his life until he returned to the dust out of which he was taken. (Gen. iii, 17–19.) Moses, in punishment of some little want of confidence in God, was, though a special favorite of heaven, forbidden to set foot on the promised land, after which he so ardently sighed. (Deut. xxxii, 48, etc.) In like manner the whole nation of the Israelites, who had come out of Egypt, were, in punishment of their repeated murmurings, condemned by God to perish in the desert (Num. xiv, 29, etc.), though there is little doubt that many among them repented and were in the end saved. Again, in the history of King David, we find that, when he had fallen into the sin of pride in numbering his people, the Prophet Nathan was sent by God to announce to him that, though his sin was pardoned on account of his sincere repentance, yet he must choose one of these three

scourges, war, famine, or pestilence, as some atonement to the justice of God.

From these examples, we plainly see that Almighty God, in forgiving the guilt of sin, often leaves some temporal punishment to be endured. But as death may easily cut us off before we have discharged the debt we owe him, he has mercifully provided us with the means of satisfying his divine justice in the other life, namely, by the temporal sufferings of purgatory.

St. Severinus, Archbishop of Cologne, was a prelate of great sanctity ; so much so, that God wrought through him many remarkable miracles. One day, after his death, however, he was seen by a canon of the Cathedral to suffer the most excruciating pains. Upon being asked why he suffered so much,—he who, on account of his holiness of life, ought to be reigning gloriously in heaven: “I suffer this torment,” he replied, “merely for having recited the Canonical Hours hurriedly and with wilful distraction.”

It is related in the life of St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, that one day she saw how the soul of one of her deceased sisters was kneeling in adoration before the blessed sacrament in the Church, all wrapped up in a mantle of fire, and suffering great pains, in expiation of her neglecting to go to holy communion on one day when she had her confessor's permission to communicate.

### 13. What is purgatory ?

*A state of suffering, in which souls are detained until they have fully satisfied God's justice for their sins.*

Purgatory is a place where souls suffer for a time on account of their sins. This is all that the Catholic Church teaches us with regard to the nature of purgatory. It is



a state and place of suffering, but not of eternal suffering; it is a place where the soul alone suffers, for its body remains in the grave until the day of the general judgment, after which there will be no purgatory, but only heaven and hell. It is a place of purgation or cleansing, as its name indicates; that is to say, it is a place where the soul is purified from such stains as prevent its entrance into the kingdom of heaven, where nothing defiled can ever enter. Estius (lib. 4, dist. 21, sec. 3, in fin.) says, with St. Thomas, that it is the common opinion of divines (which he says should not be rashly opposed) that purgatory is in the bowels of the earth, and at a distance from the gates of hell, but at such a distance that no conjecture can be formed of its extent. He adds that this is the opinion of St. Gregory (l. 4, Dial., c. 42) and of all scholastics.

As to the nature of the punishment which the soul suffers in purgatory, we only know that the sufferings of purgatory are far greater than the sufferings of this world, for there Almighty God punishes sin as it deserves.

We know that souls of great perfection have been deprived of the beatific vision of God for having committed little faults. This we learn from many apparitions of the souls of the faithful departed, who have been saved and who praised the mercy of God, declaring at the same time that the judgments of the Lord are strict and terrible beyond description, and that mortals could never reflect too deeply upon this truth. The true reason of this great rigor of the judgments of God is found in his infinite sanctity, justice, and love.

God's sanctity requires an adequate expiatory punishment, because everything that is not good and perfect is

essentially opposed to his divine nature: hence he cannot admit into heaven, to the contemplation of his divine Essence, a soul that is still spotted with the least stain of sin.

God's justice requires no less severity than his sanctity, because every sin is an offence and outrage against his divine majesty; for which reason he cannot help defending his divine right and absolute dominion over all creatures, by requiring full satisfaction from every soul that has offended against this divine majesty.

Neither can God's infinite love be less severe, because he wishes to see the souls of his elect pure, beautiful, perfect in every way; for which reason he purifies them from every stain, as gold is refined in a furnace, until they become his true image and likeness, according to which he created the first man in sanctity and righteousness. He takes no pleasure in seeing these souls suffer; but, wishing to render them capable and worthy of being united to him as to their supreme happiness, he makes them pass through a state of the most frightful sufferings, a state of the greatest poverty imaginable,—the privation of the beatific vision of God.

No sooner has the soul departed this life than it beholds God, and from this sight it receives at once so deep and vivid a knowledge of God and all his infinite perfections, that thenceforth it is utterly incapable of being occupied with anything else than the divine beauty and goodness; it feels so violently drawn towards God, the supreme Lord of all things visible and invisible, that it finds it altogether impossible to wish, to seek, and to love anything but God. It experiences at once an insatiable hunger and thirst after God; it pants for its supreme

good with a most ardent desire. "God! God! I must be with God!" is its constant cry. But at the very moment when the soul is endeavoring to unite itself to God, it is repulsed by him, and sent to purgatory to cleanse itself from the sins not cancelled in this life. In this banishment from the sight of God the soul finds the bitterness of its torments. As it is the height of happiness to see a God infinitely amiable, so it is the greatest of all pains to be rejected from his presence. It is true, during this life, the soul experiences but a feeble desire to see God, and, as it does not know the greatness of this heavenly benefit, it does not comprehend how great a pain and misfortune it is to be deprived of it. But once the soul has quitted the body, it conceives so high an esteem for the possession of the supreme good, it burns with so ardent a desire to obtain it, it tends with so much force to enjoy it, that the greatest of all its torments in purgatory is to be repulsed, if only for an instant, from the presence of its Creator. In a word, the soul suffers more from the privation of the beatific vision of God than from all the other torments of purgatory. For, such is the infinite beauty of God, that to have seen him for a single instant, and in that same moment to be rejected from his presence, is to experience at once the torment of hell. In heaven love for God is the happiness of the elect; but in purgatory it is the source of the most excruciating pains. It is principally for this reason that the souls in purgatory are called "poor souls," they being, as they are, in the most dreadful state of poverty,—that of the privation of the beatific vision of God.

After Anthony Corso, a Capuchin brother, a man of great piety and perfection, had departed this life, he appeared to one of his brethren in religion, asking him to recommend

him to the charitable prayers of the community, in order that he might receive relief in his pains: "For I do not know," said he, "how I can bear any longer the pain of being deprived of the sight of my God. I shall be the most unhappy of creatures as long as I must live in this state. Would to God all men could understand well what it is to be without God, in order that they might firmly resolve to suffer anything during their life on earth rather than expose themselves to the danger of being damned and deprived forever of the sight of God!" (Annal. PP. Capuc. ad 1548.)

The souls in purgatory are exceedingly great sufferers, because they suffer the greatest pain of the senses, which is that of *fire*. Who can be in a poorer and more pitiful condition than those who are buried in fire? Yet such is the condition of these souls. They are buried under the waves of fire. The smallest spark of this purgatorial fire causes them to suffer more intense pains than all the fires of this world. In it they suffer more than all the pains of distempers and the most violent diseases—more than all the most cruel torments undergone by malefactors, or invented by barbarous tyrants; more than all the tortures of the martyrs summed up together. Could these poor souls leave the fire of purgatory for the most frightful earthly fire, they would, as it were, take it for a pleasure-garden; they would find a fifty-years' stay in the hottest earthly fire more endurable than an hour's stay in the fire of purgatory. Our terrestrial fire was not created by God to torment men, but rather to benefit them; but the fire in purgatory was created by God for no other purpose than to be an instrument of his justice, and for this reason it is possessed of a burning quality, so intense and penetrating,



that it is impossible for us to conceive even the faintest idea of it.

A religious of the Order of St. Dominic, when about to depart this life, most earnestly begged a priest to say Mass for the repose of his soul immediately after his death. The good religious had scarcely expired when the priest went to say Mass for him with great fervor and devotion. Hardly had he taken off the sacred vestments after Mass than the soul of his deceased friend appeared, rebuking him severely for the hardness of his heart in leaving him in the torments of purgatory for thirty years. Quite astonished, the good priest exclaimed: "What, thirty years! An hour ago you were still alive!" "Learn, then, from this," said the deceased, "how excruciating are the pains of the fire of purgatory, since one hour's stay therein appears as long as thirty years." (Da Fusian, tom. iv.)

Some have been of opinion that certain souls in purgatory suffered such intense pains that they think they are damned. "But this is utterly untrue," says St. Alphonsus, "for the sentiments of the damned are very different from those of the elect. The truth is that the souls in purgatory are certain and secure of their eternal salvation: for, having departed this life in the state of grace, they have at judgment been assured of eternal life. St. Cyprian (lib. de Mor.) and St. Augustine (de Prædest. Sanct., cap. 14) say that this is of Catholic faith. These souls experience this certainty of salvation in the resignation of peace with which they endure their torments. Their very love of God gives them an assurance of an eternal kingdom, and gladdens them with the hope of going to see him: for they well know that the damned can neither love God, nor hope to see him. Hence we read in the canon of the Mass:

“Remember, O Lord! thy servants who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and rest in the sleep of peace.”

“This could not be said of the souls in purgatory if they were uncertain of salvation.” (Moral Dissert. Purg., 11, 12.)

#### **14. How do we know that there is a purgatory?**

*We know it from Holy Scripture, and from the infallible teachings of the Church.*

Let us take for example two men, one of whom has murdered a fellow-creature, and the other has stolen an apple: they both die without receiving pardon for the sin they have committed. Can we suppose for a moment that the man who has stolen an apple only, will be condemned to the same eternal place of torments as he who has committed the heinous crime of murder? If this were so, God would not be rendering to every man *according to his works*, which we know from Holy Scripture that he does, and which his justice, indeed, requires. Hence it clearly follows that there must be some middle place between heaven and hell, where he, who dies in the guilt of lesser sin, may be able to discharge the debt of punishment he owes to God, and so enter into the everlasting joys of heaven. That there is such a middle place, we know from the infallible teaching of the Church and from Holy Scripture. The doctrine of purgatory is an article of Catholic faith, founded on the word of God. This doctrine has been clearly defined by the Council of Trent in the following words: “If any saith that, after the grace of justification has been received, to every penitent sinner guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged, either in this world or in

the next in purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened to him, let him be anathema." (Sess. 6, c. xxx.) It has therefore always been the belief of the Church that there is a purgatory; for the Church has always prayed for the dead, believing that many of the dead are in a place where prayer can be of use to them. But this place cannot be heaven or hell; therefore it must be purgatory.

This doctrine of the Church is proved from the Old and the New Testament. When the valiant captain, Judas Machabæus, was fighting against the generals of King Antiochus, he suffered an unexpected reverse, and lost several of his men in battle in a manner which he could not account for. In the end, however, he gained the victory; and, on returning to the field of battle, in order to carry off for burial the bodies of the slain, he discovered, hid beneath their garments, certain idolatrous offerings, which these unhappy men had stolen from the temples of Jamnia during the recent sacking of that city. Judas at once perceived that God had suffered them to be slain in punishment of their sin. Trusting, however, that their untimely death had been accepted in atonement of their crime, and that they were not condemned at least to eternal torments, he determined to send rich presents to Jerusalem for the purpose of having sacrifice offered for the remission of their sins and the repose of their souls. He accordingly made a collection among his soldiers, and sent, as the Holy Scripture tells us, twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead. "*It is, therefore,*" the inspired writer says, "*a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.*" (2 Mach., c. xii.)

**15. What do we learn from this passage ?**

*That, besides heaven and hell, where souls are not benefited by prayers, there is another place, called purgatory, where departed souls can be helped by prayer.*

If it be a holy work and a wholesome practice to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins, there must be some souls who stand in need of our prayers; but, as the souls in heaven require not the aid of our prayers, and as the souls in hell can receive no benefit from them, there must be some third or middle state in which some souls are detained, and that third place is "purgatory." In the New Testament many passages are found in support of the same doctrine. "Whosoever," says Christ, "speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, *neither* in this world, *nor* in the world to come." (Matt. xii.) This passage clearly proves that some sins are forgiven in the next world; otherwise it would be superfluous and trifling to say of the sin against the Holy Ghost in particular, that it shall never be forgiven, either in this world or in the next. Now this truth necessarily establishes a middle state, where some sins shall be forgiven. This place cannot be heaven, for no sin can enter there to be forgiven; it cannot be hell, for in hell there is no forgiveness; therefore it must be in a middle place, distinct from both. Neither can these sins which are forgiven in the next life be mortal sins, for a soul that dies in mortal sin is immediately condemned to hell, like the rich glutton in the Gospel. Therefore it is only venial sins from which the soul is cleansed in a middle state, called purgatory.

St. Paul tells us that "the fire shall try every man's



work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide. . . he shall receive a reward; if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved so as by fire." (1 Cor. iii.) Now, as there can be no pain, or suffering, or fire in heaven; and as the fire of hell is not for trying a man's work, but for tormenting those who have been already *tried* and damned, the fire mentioned by the apostle as *trying a man's work* must be the fire of purgatory; therefore, according to St. Paul, there is a purgatory.

St. John says, in his Apocalypse, "that nothing defiled can enter the kingdom of heaven:" "And there shall not enter into it anything defiled." (Apoc. xxi, 27.) From this passage it follows that a person guilty of the very smallest sin cannot enter heaven, because he is rendered *defiled* and unclean by it, in some degree. Neither can he be damned for it, because nothing but *deadly* sin is punished with eternal flames. There must, therefore, be a *middle state*, where some sins are both punished and expiated—and this *middle state* is called purgatory—because in *heaven* there is no punishment, no sins to be punished, and "out of hell there is no redemption." St. Peter tells us that Christ, after his death, "preached to those spirits who were in prison." (1 Peter iii, 19.) Where were these *spirits*? They were not in heaven, for in heaven they would require no preaching; they were not in hell, for there preaching could not be of the least use to them; therefore, they must be in some middle place, where the preaching of Christ could be of some benefit to them; and this middle state is what is called "purgatory."

Tradition, and the unanimous testimony of the Fathers, are no less decided on the doctrine of purgatory.

St. Ephrem orders prayers for the repose of his soul after death. St. Chrysostom says: "The tears of the living are not useless to the dead: prayers and alms relieve them." (*Hom. 1 Ep. ad Corinth.*)

St. Augustine, in his "Confessions," prays for his mother Monica, and beseeches God to inspire all those who will read his book to remember at the altar Monica and his father Patricius. (*Conf., lib. ix, c. 13*). St. Gregory writes: "We must believe in a purgatorial fire for light faults." (*Lib. 4, Dial., cap. 39.*) Before the Council of Trent, this truth was defined by the Council of Lyons, in these words: "(We believe) that the soul is punished with purgatorial pains." In the Council of Florence it was declared that "souls are cleansed after death."

This doctrine is most salutary to the souls in purgatory, as we shall see when speaking of the communion of saints. This doctrine is also most salutary to ourselves.

Heaven allures us, it is true, with eternal and precious rewards, and admonishes us to avoid neither labors, conflicts, nor sacrifices to merit an imperishable crown; and hell threatens us with everlasting and unendurable punishments, and reminds us of "what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul." But purgatory, between these two eternities of the blessed and the miserable, with its temporary yet terrific sufferings, is equally salutary to make us flee from sin in order to escape being consigned to its punishments. The thought of purgatory is a powerful motive to induce us to do penance for the sins of our past life, that we may not have to undergo sufferings in the next world far surpassing those of which we read in the lives of the most severe penitents.

Purgatory reminds us how in this world we should long

and seek for nothing but God, who alone is able to satisfy the cravings of the heart, and earnestly endeavor to become more and more united to our Lord, to the supreme and only source of all happiness here below and in the world to come. In purgatory, this ardent longing for God is a source of unspeakable pain ; but, here below, it proves to be a source of unspeakable graces and blessings in all the troubles and struggles of this life.

Purgatory tells us to be patient and resigned to God's holy will in all our crossings and sufferings in this vale of tears, since the least degree of the pains of purgatory far surpasses the most excruciating torments of this world.

Purgatory tells us to profit well by our time, to apply to the frequent reception of the sacraments, to assiduous prayer and other good works, as death may overtake us and deprive us of every opportunity to do good to ourselves, and that it is great folly to depend on the charity of our friends, since they too easily forget the departed, for whom the proverb, "out of sight, out of mind," proves to be but too true.

Purgatory tells us to be careful always to keep ourselves in the grace of God, as otherwise all our good works would be neither of any merit to ourselves, nor of any profit to the souls in purgatory, if offered for them.

A certain father begged his son to pray much for him after his death. The son did so most earnestly. Thirty years after, his father appeared to him, all surrounded with fire, and suffering most intensely. "Cruel son," said he, "why have you not procured any comfort for me in the space of thirty years?" "How is that?" said the son, quite surprised and amazed. "Have I not offered up for you so many prayers, alms, fasts, and the like? Did so many pious

works not avail you anything ?” “ Know, my son,” replied the father, “ that all the good which you have done, and are still doing, as it has availed you nothing, so it has not profited me anything either, because you have done it in the state of mortal sin ; all your confessions being bad for want of true sorrow. God, in his mercy, has permitted me to tell you this, both for my and your advantage.” After this, the father suddenly disappeared, leaving his son salutarily touched and frightened, so much so that he went to make a good general confession, and began to lead a truly Christian life ; and by the practice of many good works he soon freed the soul of his father from purgatory, and his own from eternal perdition.—(Campadelli, *disc. sacr.*, 191.)



## THE EIGHTH ARTICLE.

### **1. Which is the eighth article of the Creed ?**

*“ I believe in the Holy Ghost.”*

So far our instructions on the Creed have all been about the first two persons of the Blessed Trinity, God the Father and God the Son. To these names, so precious, of Father and Son, there is joined a third, yet more delightful to him who is able to understand it. God calls himself the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost.

There are many who know but little about the Holy Ghost. They are like those Jews whom St. Paul found at Ephesus, who called themselves disciples of Christ, but, when he asked them, “ Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed ? ” they answered : “ We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Ghost.” (Acts xxi.) When St. Paul came to question them, he found that they had only been baptized in the baptism of St. John the Baptist, and that they had never been fully instructed in the doctrine of Jesus Christ. We may easily suppose that no Catholic is so ignorant as not to know that there is a Holy Ghost ; because we all have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But it is no exaggeration to say that there are many who know but little of the operations of the Holy Ghost in our souls, and of the great importance of his gifts. This is one of the great reasons why they make so little or no progress in virtue.

## 2. Who is the Holy Ghost ?

*The Holy Ghost is the third person of the blessed Trinity.*

The first thing we have to believe concerning the Holy Ghost is that he is the third person of the blessed Trinity. Though possessing one and the same divine nature with the Father and the Son, he is different in person: in other words, he is not the Father nor is he the Son, but he is the Spirit of both. How this is, we do not know; it is one of the sublime mysteries of our faith. Before the coming of our blessed Lord, this mystery was not revealed to mankind as perfectly as it is now. But when Jesus Christ came, he instructed his disciples more fully about the Holy Ghost, and taught them that, though one and the same God, he was different in person from himself and the Father. Hence it was that, at our Lord's baptism, the holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove, showing thereby that the Holy Ghost is distinct in person from the divine Son, who was baptized, and from the Father, who spoke by a voice from heaven. Again, when our Lord sent his apostles to preach to the world, he bade them baptize all nations "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" that is to say, in the name of one God and three distinct persons.

## 3. From whom does the Holy Ghost proceed ?

*The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, from all eternity.*

The second great truth which we have to believe concerning the Holy Ghost is, that from all eternity he *proceeds* from the Father and the Son. We do not say that he is born or begotten of the Father, as we do when we speak of the Son of God, but that he proceeds from both

the Father and the Son, as from one principal. Christ himself, speaking of the Holy Ghost, says: "He shall glorify me, because he shall receive of mine." (John xvi, 14.) And we also find that the Holy Ghost is sometimes called, in Holy Scripture, "the Spirit of Christ;" sometimes, "the Spirit of the Father;" is, one time, said to be sent by the Father (John xiv, 26); another time, by the Son (John xv, 26): thus signifying that he proceeds alike from the Father and the Son. "He," says St. Paul, "who has not the Spirit of Christ, belongs not to him." (Rom. viii, 9.) In the Gospel of St. Matthew he is called the Spirit of the Father: "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, that speaketh in you." (Matt. x, 20.) From these words it is evident that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. The manner of this divine procession is a mystery. Christ has taught it, and therefore we believe it most firmly.

#### 4. Where is the Holy Ghost?

*The Holy Ghost is everywhere, because he is God; but, as he is the dispenser of grace, he is especially with the Catholic Church, and in the souls of the just.*

The third truth which we must believe concerning the Holy Ghost is, that he is equally God with the Father and the Son, equally all-powerful, eternal, perfect, the Supreme Good, infinitely wise. When, in the Acts of the Apostles, St. Peter says, "Ananias! why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart?" he immediately adds: "Thou hast not lied to men, but to God" (v, 3, 4), calling him God to whom he had before given the name of Holy Ghost. Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost is Lord or Master of all; and as he possesses, like them, the nature of God,

he is equally worthy of our adoration, praise and love. Hence it is that, in the Creed at Mass, we pray : "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who, together with the Father and the Son, is *adored and glorified* : who spoke by the prophets." Being God, then, he is, like the Father and the Son, everywhere, and knows and can do, like them, all things. But the Holy Ghost is especially with the Catholic Church and in the souls of the just.

Our divine Lord made a great promise to all his faithful followers when he said : If you love me, I will pray to my Father, and he will send you the Holy Spirit, that he may always dwell in you : "If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father that he shall give you another Paraclete (Comforter), that he may abide with you forever." (John xiv, 15, 16.) This promise was fulfilled on the tenth day after his ascension into heaven. On that day the apostles did not receive the Holy Ghost for themselves alone ; they received him also to communicate him, by themselves and their successors, to all faithful followers of Christ. Indeed, it is not even natural to suppose that the special gifts and powers by which the knowledge of Christ, and faith in him, were to be spread over the world, were to die with the first few men to whom those gifts and powers were given. St. Luke tells us that, when the apostles had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. These two apostles prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, who was not as yet come upon any of them. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost. (Acts viii, 14-17.) Thus did the faithful receive the Holy Ghost by the ministry



of the apostles or their successors, both in baptism and confirmation. On this account St. Paul writes: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, *who is given to us.*" (Rom. v, 5.) Hence, St. Bonaventure says "that the just receive, not only the gifts, but also the person, of the Holy Ghost" (1 Suet., d. 14, a. 2, 9, 1), because, when the Holy Ghost infuses his charity and other gifts into a soul, he is so united to his gifts that he infuses, together with them, himself, really, in person. The same is taught by the renowned Master of Sentences (lib. i, dist. 14 et 15), who quotes St. Augustine and others, in support of this doctrine. "Grace," says Suarez, "establishes a most perfect friendship between God and man; and such a friendship requires the presence of the friend, that is, the Holy Ghost, who stays in the soul of his friend, in order to unite himself most intimately with him, and reside in his soul, as in his temple." It is for this reason that St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "You are the temple of the living God;" as God saith: "I will dwell in them, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Lev. xxvi, 12); "I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord." (Jer. xxxi, 9.) Since that remarkable day on which the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles, he has never abandoned, and will never abandon, the faithful followers of Christ, the living members of his Church.

### **5. How long does the Holy Ghost dwell in the soul?**

*As long as the soul is free from mortal sin.*

We read, in the Gospel of St. Luke (ii, 25), that "there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon; and this man

was just and devout . . . and the Holy Ghost was in him." The soul in which the Holy Ghost dwells is so marvellously beautiful in the light of grace, that, could we but gaze on it, we would die of joy, for such a soul is the living image of the living God. What happiness on earth can be compared to it! As for myself, I know of no greater comfort, nor of any more ravishing delight, than that of being in the grace of God, of being a temple of the Holy Ghost. O what sweet comfort, what rapture there is in this thought!—a comfort, a happiness, not transitory, like the pleasures of the senses,—a comfort, increasing in intensity in proportion to its duration!

The Holy Ghost shields that soul from all that can injure her salvation, and bestows on her all that can promote it. He holds the demon in check, that he may not tempt the soul above her strength; and it is well to remark that the power of the devil is so great, his artifices so subtle, his experience so vast, his will so malicious, that, if God did not restrain him, he would pervert even the holiest of men. There is no man so humble that the devil would not render proud, so chaste that he would not render unchaste, so charitable that he would not render cruel, so temperate that he would not render intemperate. If he could, the devil would exterminate everywhere the worship of the true God, root out all sentiments of religion, fill cities, kingdoms, provinces, and families with the most horrible confusion; but God restrains Satan from doing all the evil he wishes to do. He allows him to go only the length of his chain. God holds him back as lions or mad dogs are kept back by their keepers. These animals cannot injure those who look at them, unless the keeper loosens their chains. The Holy Ghost moderates and governs, in regard

to the just in whom he dwells, the envy with which the demon burns for their ruin. He weakens the force of Satan's arm when he attacks them. He wards off the arrows of the arch-enemy of souls in counteracting the fury of his strokes, so that he cannot injure the just more than they allow him to injure them.

Moreover, the Holy Ghost turns from the just many temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to which, on account of their weakness and the strength of their enemies, they should infallibly yield, if God permitted them to be attacked by these enemies. Hence, by the secret design of the Holy Ghost, and with hands full of mercy, he wards off these temptations; or, if he permits them to assail the just, he renders their minds, as it were, incapable of perceiving them, or turns them to some other object that they may forget the temptation, which soon vanishes. The Holy Ghost leads them, as it were, by the hand in the way of salvation, sweetens the fatigues of their pilgrimage, consoles them in their sorrows, removes obstacles from their path, gives them occasions of practising virtue, and light and strength to practise it.

There is, however, one great misfortune, into which the just man may fall for want of prayer and watchfulness,—the misfortune of committing a mortal sin. The Holy Ghost departs from the soul the very moment in which it commits a mortal sin. From that very moment the Holy Ghost inspires no longer the soul with good thoughts and knowledge as he did before. He will enlighten the mind, but at long intervals, with a pale and feeble light, like that of a winter's sun. In proportion as the will grows weaker, the imagination becomes stronger and fixes itself without restraint on foolish and dangerous objects, until at length

the beautiful soul, created by God for himself and to his own likeness, finds it difficult to look up to its divine Creator and say even a single "Our Father." Turning aside from its Creator, it attaches itself to creatures, and grows careless about the great business of salvation. It finds the exercises of piety, interior and exterior mortification, obedience, and other religious duties, tedious and insupportable. Like the lost prodigal who has wandered from his father's house, the heart craves only after the husks of swine—sinful pleasures. And as we have abandoned our heavenly Father, he allows us to go our way, withdraws his special and sustaining grace from us, and contents himself with ordinary solicitude, so that the soul is in great danger of being wounded to death.

He permits the devil to have more power over it, to inflame the passions, to darken the intellect. Then the devil, having full sway, drives the soul whithersoever he wills. He tells it to stay away from confession; to enter a secret society; to go to the barroom, to the gambling-saloon, to the house of ill-fame; he tells it to commit those secret and shameful sins: and it does the devil's bidding in all things. And thus the soul, created for heaven, becomes the slave of the devil. He is ever at its side. He holds the soul bound fast with an iron chain. Day and night he is accusing it, and begging God to suffer him to take it with him to hell. Many have been found dead in the morning strangled by the devil, like the seven husbands of Sara.

Behold what happens to the soul when God the Holy Ghost withdraws from her on account of mortal sin!



**6. What are the particular gifts of the Holy Ghost ?**

*These seven : 1, wisdom ; 2, understanding ; 3, knowledge ; 4, counsel ; 5, piety ; 6, fortitude ; 7, the fear of the Lord.*

There are certain admirable effects, certain exalted gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are said to come from him as from an ever-flowing fountain of goodness. Although the extrinsic works of the most holy Trinity are common to the three persons, yet many of them are attributed especially to the Holy Ghost, in order that we may understand that they arise from the boundless love of God towards us : for, as the Holy Ghost is the substantial love of the Father and of the Son, we may comprehend that these effects which are referred particularly to the Holy Ghost, are the result of the boundless love of God towards us.

Hence it is that the Holy Ghost is called a gift ; for, by a gift is meant that which is kindly and gratuitously bestowed without reference to preceding remuneration. Whatever gifts and graces, therefore, have been bestowed upon us by Almighty God, we should piously and gratefully acknowledge as bestowed by the Holy Ghost. The Prophet Isaias enumerates seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the first of which is “ the spirit of wisdom.”

**7. What does the gift of wisdom effect in the soul ?**

*The gift of wisdom detaches us from the world, and gives us a taste and love only for the things of God.*

The gift of wisdom makes us understand how to appreciate things at their value. Before receiving this gift, the apostles did not esteem and value the things of God and their own salvation more than all the fleeting pleasures of this world. They were given up to worldly thoughts, preoccupied entirely with the care of their bodies, and the

desire to rise in the world by their Master's favor. "There was a strife among them, which of them should seem to be greater" (Luke xxii, 24), and, besides, they cared but little to watch or to pray with Jesus. Behold what the apostles were, and we all are, without the gift of wisdom: cold and indifferent in spiritual things, in exercises of piety, humility, mortification, penance; finding a thousand excuses for shortening or omitting them; whilst we are full of activity about worldly matters and all that concerns our temporal welfare! But, if the gift of wisdom is in us, it will not allow us to seek after the pleasures of the world, the esteem of men, or the world's goods, but will impart to us a knowledge and love of God which tend continually to him, and which seek and find him in all things.

#### **8. What does the gift of understanding effect in the soul?**

*The gift of understanding enables us to understand more clearly the truths of religion, and our duties towards God and our neighbor.*

A man without the gift of understanding is incapable of comprehending the things of God, or of contemplating the perfections of God. The very world in which he lives exhibits them to him, puts them, as it were, under his very hand, and yet he does not see them. He is like a blind person before a picture. The most touching spiritual books are read or explained to him, and he understands nothing of them. He is as indifferent as if he had literally no power of comprehension. Before the apostles had received the gift of understanding, they understood nothing of the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," which our dear Lord explained to them. They always interpreted his words in a material and carnal sense, so as to merit

from him the rebuke, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" (Matt. xv, 16.) But the gift of understanding which the Holy Ghost bestowed upon them on the feast of Pentecost, manifested to them the mysteries of religion so as to remove the obscurity of faith. By this gift they understood that those who suffer persecution are blessed, that there is honor in bearing contempt, and that the flight of worldly pleasure is solid joy to the true followers of Christ.

### 9. What is the effect of the gift of knowledge in the soul?

*The gift of knowledge enables us to know God and ourselves, and to distinguish good from evil.*

Knowledge makes us acquainted with our duties towards God, and points out to us the good which we are to practise, and the evil which we are to avoid. This gift instructs us in every virtue and in every duty, and directs our steps in the ways of God. Hence the Wise Man says that wisdom "conducted the just . . . through the right ways, and showed him the kingdom of God, and gave him the knowledge of the holy things." (Wisd. x, 10.) By the gift of knowledge the Holy Ghost teaches us to judge soundly of all things; he shows us that, as the goods of this life are perishable, we should seek those which are eternal; and that, as the evils of this world are passing, we should turn them to profit; that poverty is a treasure; the flight from honor, an approach towards God; corporal maladies, the health of the soul; and death, an entrance into life.

**10. What is the effect of the gift of counsel in the soul ?**

*The gift of counsel enables us to choose what contributes most to the glory of God and our own salvation.*

Without the gift of counsel, we are full of illusions, darkness of mind, false judgments, and hesitation ; vacillating in our thoughts, affections, and conduct ; drifting with the stream, feeble and inconsistent, beginning and breaking off, willing and not willing, changeable as the wind, and unable to make any progress in virtue ; we are the sport of our own imagination, of the illusions of the devil, and of circumstances. Before having received the gift of counsel, the apostles desired, it is true, to follow Jesus in the way of the evangelical counsels, yet, at the same time, they cherished earthly hopes in their hearts. One day they were full of zeal and courage ; the next, they were cast down and sad. But, by the gift of counsel, the Holy Ghost spoke to them, and speaks to us as a faithful friend, discovering to us the snares and artifices of our enemies, guiding us safely through all dangers, directing every action for the glory of God, and removing every difficulty in the way of salvation.

**11. What does the gift of piety effect in the soul ?**

*The gift of piety enables us to serve God with facility and delight.*

Without the gift of piety we love God for our own advantage rather than for his own sake. When we try to avoid offending him, it is chiefly to avoid the punishment of sin, the torments of hell, the sufferings of purgatory. And when we make any voluntary acts of virtue, it is chiefly for the sake of the reward promised to virtue. These dispositions are certainly not sinful, nor even blameworthy,



but are far removed from true filial piety and perfect charity. How imperfect was the love of the apostles for their divine Master before the feast of Pentecost ! It was far less a pure sentiment of childlike affection than the spirit of self-interest and egotism. They loved him more for their own sakes than for his. Hence the cowardice and treachery of their conduct towards him, especially at the time of his passion and death. But, by the gift of piety, the Holy Ghost made the apostles, and makes us, perform with pleasure everything regarding the service of God ; he makes us quite in earnest and perfectly fervent in the discharge of our duties, and makes us run on with vigor and alacrity in the ways of God's commandments. He makes us feel compassion for the miseries of our poor brethren, and afford them every hope and relief that we can give them ; and he makes us do all this more for his own sake than for ours.

## **12. What does the gift of fortitude effect in the soul ?**

*The gift of fortitude enables us to overcome, courageously, all difficulties and obstacles in our way to heaven.*

Without the gift of fortitude, we are, indeed, strong in making promises, protests, and good resolutions, but weak and cowardly when it comes to putting them into practice ; breaking our firmest resolutions almost as soon as we have made them ; yielding to the smallest temptation ; always finding some excuse for neglecting some point of God's commandments, or some duty of our state of life ; often unable to make the slightest effort even in a trivial matter, such as rising in the morning to be at Mass in due time.

Before being endowed with " power from on high," the apostles were, indeed, men of good will, but weak, timid,

and cowardly in the extreme. At the last supper, they all made strong protestations of fidelity to their divine Master, and declared themselves ready to follow him to prison and to death; and yet the moment they saw him taken by the soldiers of the high-priest, they all forsook him and fled. But, by the gift of fortitude, the Holy Ghost raised the apostles, and raises us, above all that seems either estimable or formidable in nature. All that the world contains in the circle of its vanities becomes an object of contempt, because the light of the Holy Ghost discovers to the soul that it is a shameful baseness in him who is heir to a heavenly empire to become the slave of earth, and to cast himself beneath that which God has placed under his feet. The soul, animated by the Holy Ghost, displays not less courage under sufferings, though all the evils of life combine in assailing it; the soul that possesses God, having nothing to fear, remains firm and tranquil, passes courageously through poverty, sickness, torments and even death, that it may forever enjoy him who is the source of all happiness.

### **13. What is the effect of the fear of the Lord in the soul?**

*The gift of the fear of the Lord fills us with respect, mingled with love, for God, and makes us dread to offend him.*

The spirit of the world despises holy things, and the sinner who serves God without respect, offends him without remorse. But a soul in which the Holy Ghost dwells, knows the value of the treasure possessed, and the fragility of the vessel in which it is contained; therefore it trembles at every step. This fear is the gift of the Holy Ghost. By this gift the Holy Ghost impresses upon the soul a

great respect for the awful majesty of God, and a salutary dread of offending him. By this gift he makes us fear God, not as a slave fears his master, but as a fond child fears a good father. He inspires us with a sincere desire to do everything that may be pleasing to God, and makes us avoid not only grievous sins, which draw down upon us the wrath of God, but also the least faults, and anything that could in any way sadden the Divine Spirit.

## THE NINTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

### **1. Which is the ninth article of the Creed?**

*“The holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints.”*

As for questions and answers about the Church, see “The Church and Her Enemies,” pp. 151–328.

### **2. What is meant by the “communion of saints”?**

*All the members of the Church united to Christ; that is: 1, the saints in heaven, called the Church triumphant; 2, the souls in purgatory, called the Church suffering; 3, the faithful on earth, called the Church militant.*

The Church of Christ, considered in its widest signification, comprises all those who belong to him by faith—wherever they are, or in whatever state or condition they may be. The members of this Church are divided into three classes. The first contains all those who belong to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church upon earth.

Although there are in the Church a great many sinners, yet the faithful of which it consists are called saints: 1. Because, since the Church was founded by Jesus Christ, all its members have been sanctified by baptism. 2. Because, as long as they persevere in grace—or when, having lost it by sin, they recover it by penance—they are saints. 3. Because they are always called to a holy life, and ought, in order to correspond with the designs of God, to walk in the way of justice and perfection, that they may enjoy one day the glory and happiness of the saints. It is for this reason that St. Paul, when speaking or writing



to the faithful of his time, called them saints. This portion of the Church is generally called "the Church militant;" that is, the fighting Church, because her children are still fighting against the enemies of their salvation, and working hard to obtain eternal happiness.

The faithful, of whom the Church of God on earth is composed, form altogether but one and the same body, of which Jesus Christ is the head. From the strict union existing among all its members, there arises a communication of *spiritual* goods, or of such good things as relate to our salvation: that is to say, that these *spiritual* goods are common to all the members of the Church, and that each has a right to participate in what belongs equally to all. This is what is meant by the "communion of saints." The word *communion* means a common union, by which good things are mutually communicated to one another by all its members; and the "communion of saints" signifies a mutual communication of *spiritual* goods, or of things which relate to our salvation.

The spiritual goods which are common to all the members of the Church are: 1. "The sacraments," in which each member of the Church *militant* has a right to participate, and draw therefrom holiness and justice. 2. "The holy sacrifice of the Mass," which is every day offered for us, and which draws down on us the graces and favors of heaven. 3. "The prayers and good works of the faithful," for each member of the Church has a part in all her prayers, both public and private. The word *I* is unknown in the society of the faithful, for every one prays, not only for himself or herself, but for all. In addressing our petitions to God, we do not say, "My Father," but, "Our Father." All the good works which are done in this world, wherever performed,

of what kind soever, and by whomsoever done, we are made partakers of. 4. "The merits of all the faithful," in which we have a share; we are participators of all the graces which each has received, of all the goods of the Church in general, and of all the miracles and prophecies of her children, beginning with Jesus Christ, her head.

Of all "these spiritual goods" there is formed an inexhaustible treasure, which belongs to all the faithful. These spiritual blessings receive all their value from the merits of Jesus Christ; for it is by means of the sacraments and of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, that our divine Lord has transferred, communicated, and applied to the members of his Church all that he has merited by his passion and death.

The better to understand this intimate union existing among the members of the Church, St. Paul compares the Church to the human body, in which there is only one head, but many limbs, senses, and members, which have all some office or duty to perform for the common good of the whole body. Thus, the hands work for the support of the body, the feet convey it from place to place, the eyes watch to guard it from danger, the stomach digests the food, and so of the rest. So is it in the Church of Christ. Whatever good any member does, profits not only himself, but every member of the Church to which he belongs. In this manner, the prayers and works of penance of many holy monks and nuns, and other virtuous Catholics throughout the world, obtain for us, their fellow-members, many graces and blessings from God, though we do not know at the time through whose prayers they come. The sacrifice of the Mass, which is offered by any priest, in any particular place, in any part of the world, is useful to all, because it

is offered for all; for the Church, by the hands of her minister, offers up for all the Victim that was sacrificed for all. O how many are the advantages we possess in being members of the Church! Not a good thought, word, or deed of any single member, that the rest cannot lay claim to! How we should, then, rejoice and feel happy at the goodness and piety of others! Let us endeavor to contribute to this common treasure by performing good works; for it is just that he who wishes to derive benefit from a common treasure, should make every exertion to contribute something to the support of it.

St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine, was sorely afflicted at witnessing the impiety and dissolute morals of her son. Bitter were the tears she shed day and night over his wanderings, and incessant were her prayers for his conversion. As she was one day giving an account to a holy bishop of the sorrow and uneasiness given her by her son's wicked course of life, and added that she doubted of ever effecting his conversion, the holy man consoled her by these words: "It is impossible that a child of such tears and so many prayers should perish." And so it came to pass; for her prayers were heard, and her son, great sinner though he was, became a great saint and doctor of the Church.

The second class comprises all those souls who are suffering in purgatory for a time on account of their sins. This portion of the Church is called "the Church suffering," because its members are continually sighing for the happy moment which is to unite them with the saints in heaven.

The third class is composed of all those who have fought manfully, conquered all their enemies, fully satisfied the justice of God, and are now saints of God, triumphing in

heaven, in the possession of everlasting happiness, and therefore are called "the Church triumphant."

These three classes of the Church,—the Church militant, the Church suffering, and the Church triumphant, form, all together, one and the same society, one and the same people, one and the same body, one and the same Church ; for all its members, those in heaven, those in purgatory, those on earth, are united together by mutual relations and indissoluble ties. They all obey the same head, which is Jesus Christ ; they are animated with the same spirit, which is the spirit of Jesus Christ ; they are destined for the same happiness, which is that of enjoying God forever in heaven.

### **3. What advantage is derived from the communion of saints ?**

*The saints in heaven help us and the souls in purgatory by their prayers and merits ; and we help the souls in purgatory by our prayers and good works, and especially by the holy sacrifice of the Mass.*

The saints in heaven, especially the Blessed Virgin, take a great interest in our spiritual and temporal welfare. Now placed in heaven, they behold God clearly revealed to them, swimming, as it were, in joy, but not forgetting us. It is not a land of oblivion in which they dwell. Heaven does not harden hearts, but makes them more tender and more compassionate ; it does not distract minds or alienate them ; it does not diminish, but increases affection, charity, and piety. How could those forget us who were once among us, and suffered what they see us suffer ? No ; the just are most desirous to see us happy with them in heaven. The saints are not like that cupbearer of Pharaoh, who could forget his fellow-captive. They are



not so immersed in heavenly glory as to forget our miseries. They are the great friends of God, and, by their influence with him, they obtain for us thousands of blessings by their fervent prayers, in order that we may become worthy of the happiness which they now enjoy. Is not this a great advantage for us?

We, on our part, praise God for the graces which he has bestowed upon the saints in heaven; we honor them as the friends of God; we propose to ourselves their virtues for imitation; we beg a share in their prayers; we ask them never to cease praying for us, and to offer our prayers to Almighty God.

The saints in heaven, especially the Blessed Virgin, are not less interested in the souls in purgatory. They know that these souls are secure of salvation, and greatly desire to be with the elect in heaven. Hence they beseech Almighty God to have pity on those souls, to shorten and diminish their sufferings, and admit them to the happiness of heaven. It is especially the blessed Mother of God who uses her influence with her divine Son in behalf of the souls in purgatory. Mary is not only the powerful and merciful mother of the just, and even of sinners on earth, but she is also a most tender and compassionating mother of the suffering souls in purgatory. This divine Mother, in her revelations to St. Bridget, said: "I am the mother of all the souls in purgatory; and all the sufferings which they deserve for the sins committed during life are, every hour, while they stay there, alleviated in some measure by my prayers." ("Rev. C.," l. iv, 132.) "O how kind and beneficent is the holy Virgin to those who are suffering in purgatory!" says St. Vincent Ferrer. "Through her they receive continual consolation and refreshment."

("Serm. 2 de Nat.") The Blessed Virgin said to St. Bridget, that as a poor sick person, suffering and deserted on his bed, feels himself refreshed by some word of consolation, so those souls feel themselves consoled in hearing only her name. If the name alone of Mary is for these souls a great comfort, what relief must they not experience when we say the Rosary for them, in which we offer up the blood of Jesus Christ, the indulgences attached to each Hail Mary, and in which we ask the Mother of God to pray for them !

Father Eusebius Nieremberg relates that there lived in the city of Aragona a girl, named Alexandra, who, being noble and very beautiful, was greatly loved by two young men. Through jealousy, they one day fought and killed each other. Their enraged relatives, in return, killed the poor young girl as the cause of so much trouble, cut off her head, and threw the mangled corpse into a well. A few days after, St. Dominic was passing through that place, and, inspired by the Lord, approached the well and said : "Alexandra, come forth !" and immediately the head of the deceased came forth, placed itself on the edge of the well, and prayed St. Dominic to hear its confession. The saint heard its confession, and also gave it communion in presence of a great concourse of persons, who had assembled to witness the miracle. Then St. Dominic ordered her to speak, and tell why she had received that grace. Alexandra answered that, when she was beheaded, she was in the state of mortal sin, but that the most holy Mary, on account of the Rosary which she was in the habit of reciting, had preserved her in life. Two days the head retained its life upon the edge of the well, in the presence of all, and then the soul went to purgatory. But fifteen

days after, the soul of Alexandra appeared to St. Dominic, beautiful and radiant as a star, and told him that one of the principal sources of relief to the souls in purgatory is the Rosary which is recited for them; and that, as soon as they arrive in paradise, they pray for those who apply to them these powerful prayers. Having said this, St. Dominic saw that happy soul ascending in triumph to the kingdom of the blessed. ("Troph. Marian," l. iv, c. 29.)

As the saints in heaven assist us and the souls in purgatory by their prayers, so, in like manner, we can assist these suffering souls by our prayers and good works. These holy prisoners and debtors to the divine justice are quite helpless. A sick man afflicted in all his limbs, and a beggar in the most painful and destitute condition, have still a tongue left to ask relief. At least they can implore heaven—it is never deaf to their prayer. But the souls in purgatory are so poor that they cannot do even this. The cases in which some of them were permitted to appear to their friends and ask assistance, are but exceptions. To whom should they have recourse? Perhaps to the mercy of God! Alas! they send forth their sighs plaintively: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God! When shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?" (Ps. xli, 11.) "Lord, where are thy ancient mercies?" (Ps. lxxxviii, 50.) "I cry to thee, and thou hearest me not; I stand up, and thou dost not regard me. Thou art changed to be cruel towards me." (Job. xxx, 20, 21.) But the Lord does not regard their tears, nor heed their moans and cries, but answers them that his justice must be satisfied to the last farthing.

Are they to endeavor to acquire new merits, and thereby purify themselves more and more? Alas! they know that their time for meriting is passed away, that their earthly pilgrimage is over, and that upon them is come that fatal "*night in which no one can work.*" (John ix, 4.) They know that by all their sufferings they can gain no new merit, no higher glory and happiness in heaven; they know that it is through their own fault they are condemned to this state of suffering; they see clearly how many admonitions, exhortations, inspirations, and divine lights they have rejected; how many prayers, opportunities of receiving the sacraments, and profiting by the means of grace within their reach, they have neglected through mere caprice, carelessness and indolence. They see their ingratitude towards God, and the deep wounds they have made in the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and their extreme grief and sorrow for all this is a worm never ceasing to gnaw at them, a heart-rending pain, a killing torment—that of knowing that they have placed themselves wilfully and wantonly in this state of the most cruel banishment. "O cruel comforts! O accursed ease!" they cry out, "it is on your account that we are deprived of the enjoyment of God, our only happiness for all eternity!"

Shall they console themselves by the thought that their sufferings will soon be over? They are ignorant of their duration, unless it be revealed to them by God. Hence they sigh day and night, hence they weep constantly, and cry unceasingly: "Woe unto us that our sojourn is prolonged!"

Shall these poor, helpless souls seek relief from their fellow-sufferers, all utterly incapable of procuring mutual relief? Lamenting, sobbing, and sighing, shedding torrents of tears, and crying aloud, they stretch out their



hands for one to help, console, and relieve them. We alone have it in our power to assist them in their sufferings by our prayers and good works; and whatever we do to release those souls from their pains is a work which gives great pleasure to Almighty God. The souls in purgatory are holy souls. They are confirmed in grace, and no longer in a condition to offend God or to forfeit heaven. They love God above everything; all their disorderly affections and passions have died away, and, as they love God, so are they loved by him in an unutterable manner. For this reason, our Lord wishes that they should be united to him as soon as possible; but, as he is a God most holy and most just, his holiness and justice forbid him to admit them into the city of the heavenly Jerusalem before their indebtedness to his divine justice has been fully discharged, either by their own sufferings, or by the prayers and good works of their brethren on earth. To remove, then, by our charity this bar to the divine goodness, and to assist these souls in being sooner united to the angelic choirs and the number of the blessed in heaven, there to love, praise and glorify God in a most perfect manner, cannot but be a work most pleasing and most acceptable to the Almighty. "I was hungry," he will say to the elect on the day of judgment, "and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me." And when the just will ask the Lord upon what occasion they acted thus towards him, he will answer: "Amen, I say to you: As long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. xxv, 35-40.) Truly, if our Lord so highly values the least act of charity, what

value will he not set on that charity which freed from their expiatory place such souls as were already espoused to him for all eternity !

We read, in the life and revelations of St. Gertrude, that she one day inquired of our Lord why the recital of the Psalter for the souls of the departed was so agreeable to him, and why it obtained such great relief for them, since the immense number of psalms and the long prayers after each caused more weariness than devotion. Our Lord replied : " The desire which I have for the deliverance of the souls of the departed makes it acceptable to me. Even as a prince who had been obliged to imprison one of his nobles, to whom he was much attached, and was compelled by his justice to refuse him pardon, would most thankfully avail himself of the intercession and satisfaction of others to release his friend. Thus do I act towards those whom I have redeemed by my death and precious blood, rejoicing in the opportunity of releasing them from their pains and bringing them to eternal joy." " But," continued the saint, " is the labor of those who recite this Psalter acceptable to thee ? " He replied : " My love makes it most agreeable to me ; and if a soul is released thereby, I accept it as if I had been myself delivered from captivity : and I will assuredly reward it at a fitting time, according to the abundance of my mercy." (Chap. xvi.)

St. Gertrude never felt happier than on the days on which she had prayed much for the relief of the souls in purgatory. Once she asked our Saviour why it was that she felt so happy on those days. " It is," he replied, " because it would not be right for me to refuse the  *fervent*  prayers which you on these days pour out to me for the relief of my suffering spouses in purgatory." " It is not right for

me," says Jesus Christ, "to refuse the prayers which you address to me in behalf of my captive spouses." How consoling, then, and at the same time how encouraging, must it be to remember in our prayers the poor sufferers of purgatory.

Dinocrates, the brother of St. Perpetua, died at the age of seven years. One day, when St. Perpetua was in prison for the sake of the faith, she had the following vision: "I saw Dinocrates," she says, "coming out of a dark place, where there were many others, exceedingly hot and thirsty: his face was dirty, his complexion pale, with the ulcer in his face of which he died, and it was for him that I prayed. There seemed a great distance between him and me, so that it was impossible for us to come to each other. Near him stood a vessel full of water, whose brim was higher than the stature of an infant. He attempted to drink, but he could not reach the water. This mightily grieved me, and I awoke. By this I knew my brother was in pain, but I trusted I could by prayer relieve him; so I began to pray for him, beseeching God with tears, day and night, that he would grant me my request, as I continued to do till we removed to the camp-prison. The day we were in the stocks I had this vision: I saw the place, which I had beheld dark before, now luminous; and Dinocrates, with his body very clean and well clad, refreshing himself, and instead of his wound, a scar only. I awaked, and I knew he was relieved from his pains." ("Butler's Lives of the Saints.")

After St. Ludgardis had offered up many fervent prayers for the repose of the soul of her deceased friend Simeon, Abbot of the monastery of Soniac, our Lord appeared to her, saying: "Be consoled, my daughter; on account of

thy prayers I will soon release this soul from purgatory." "O Jesus, Lord and Master of my heart!" she rejoined, "I cannot feel consoled so long as I know that the soul of my friend is suffering so much in the purgatorial fire! Oh! I cannot help shedding most bitter tears until thou hast released this soul from her sufferings." Touched and overcome by this tender prayer, our Lord released the soul of Simeon, who appeared to Ludgardis all radiant with heavenly glory, and thanked her for the many fervent prayers which she had offered up for his delivery. He also told the saint that, had it not been for her *fervent* prayers, he would have been obliged to stay in purgatory for eleven years. ("Life," l. i, c. 4.) "It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought," says Holy Writ, "to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." (2 Mach. xii, 46.)

The relief, however, which the souls in purgatory receive from our prayers, is in proportion to the fervor with which we say them. This was one day expressly declared by our Lord to St. Gertrude, when asking him, "How many souls were delivered from purgatory by her and her sisters' prayers?" "The number," replied our Lord, "is proportionate to the *zeal and fervor* of those who pray for them. Although the souls of the departed are much benefited by these vigils and other prayers, nevertheless a few words said with *affection* and *devotion* are of far more value to them." And this may be easily explained by a familiar comparison: it is much easier to wash away the stains of mud or dirt from the hands by rubbing them quickly in a little warm water, than by pouring a quantity of cold water on them without using any friction; so a single word said with fervor and devotion for the souls



of the departed, is of far greater efficacy than many vigils and prayers coldly and negligently offered.

Another means to relieve the souls in purgatory is to gain indulgences for them. Very many plenary indulgences can be gained for the souls in purgatory, when we make the Stations of the Way of the Cross. The merit of this exercise, if applied to these souls, obtains great relief for them. We read in the life of Catharine Emmerich, a very pious Augustinian nun, that the souls in purgatory often came to her during the night, and requested her to rise and make the Stations for their relief. It is also related, in the life of the Venerable Mary of Antigua, that a deceased sister of her convent appeared to her and said: "Why do you not make the Stations of the Way of the Cross for me?" Whilst the servant of the Lord felt surprised and astonished at these words, Jesus Christ himself spoke to her, thus: "The exercise of the Stations is of the greatest advantage to the souls in purgatory, so much so that this soul has been permitted by me to ask of you its performance in behalf of them all. Your frequent performance of this exercise to procure relief for these souls has induced them to hold intercourse with you, and you shall have them for so many intercessors and protectors before my justice. Tell your sisters to rejoice at these treasures, and the splendid capital which they have in them, that they may grow rich upon it."

To give alms is another excellent means to obtain relief for the souls in purgatory. Almsgiving is a work of mercy, and is, therefore more especially apt to obtain mercy for the suffering souls. But not the rich alone, the poor too, can give alms, for the merit of almsgiving does not depend on the greatness of the gift. Of the poor

widow who gave but one penny, our Lord said that she had given more than all the rich who had offered gold and silver, because these offered only of their abundance, whilst the poor widow gave what she saved from her daily sustenance. The poor are in general more charitable than the rich. It is true, there are many wealthy persons who distribute, with a generous heart, many and great alms; yet the poor are in general more inclined to mercy, because from their own experience they know what it is to be in want, and also because they need less, and are not so much attached to temporal goods. Even if one is so poor as to be obliged to live on alms, still he will always find an opportunity to perform charitable services to his neighbor; and we know from the Gospel that even a drink of cold water, given for God's sake, will not remain unrewarded.

The venerable servant of God, Father Clement Hoffbauer, of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, who died in Vienna in the year 1820, and whose cause of beatification has already been introduced, once assisted a man of distinction for death. A short time afterwards, the same man appeared to his wife in a dream, in a very pitiable condition, his clothes in rags, and quite haggard and shivering with cold. He begged her to have pity on him, because he could scarcely endure the extreme hunger and cold which he suffered. His wife went without delay to Father Hoffbauer, related her dream, and asked his advice on this point. The confessor, enlightened by God, immediately understood what this dream meant, and what kind of assistance was especially needed and asked for by this poor soul. He accordingly advised her to clothe a poor beggar. The woman followed the advice, and soon after, her husband again appeared to her, dressed in a

white garment and his countenance beaming with joy, thanking her for the help which she had offered him.

The most efficacious of all means to release these poor souls from their painful captivity is, undoubtedly, the holy sacrifice of Mass. St. Jerome says that, by every Mass, not one only, but several souls, are delivered from purgatory; and (*Apud Bern. de Busto, Serm. 3 de Missa,*) he is of opinion that the soul for which the priest says Mass, suffers no pain at all while the holy sacrifice lasts.

St. Augustine writes: "The pompous funeral procession, the sumptuous attention to the burial, the construction of costly monuments, are some sort of solace to the living, not aids to the dead. Whereas it is not to be doubted that the dead are aided by alms, prayers of the holy Church, and *by the salutary sacrifice.*" (T. v, Serm. 172, nn. 2. 3, col. 1196.) And in another place: "Nor is it to be denied that the souls of the departed are relieved by the piety of their living friends, when the sacrifice of the Mediator is offered for them." (T. vi, de Octo Dulcit. Quæst., n. 4, col. 222.) "Not in vain," says St. John Chrysostom, "were these things ordained by the apostles that a memorial of the departed be made at the awful mysteries. They knew great gain and great aid accrue to them. For, when all the people stand stretching out their hands, a priestly assemblage, and the awful sacrifice lies to open view, how shall we not propitiate God for those departed when we call upon him?" (T. xi, Hom. iii in Ep. ad Philip.) "It is for this reason," continues this great saint, "that there is no time fitter to treat or converse with Almighty God than that of the divine sacrifice; that the angels profit by this time as the most favorable to beg graces for men and the souls in purgatory; that, at the

moment in which the sacrifice of Mass is offered, these heavenly messengers presently fly to open the prison of purgatory, and to execute all that God has been pleased to grant by the prayers of the faithful and the merits of his Son."

The fathers of the Council of Trent declare that, by the sacrifice of the Mass, the souls in purgatory are most efficaciously relieved. It is for this reason that the sacrifice of the Mass is offered up, not only for the living, but also for the dead; that is to say, God is implored, for the sake of Christ's oblation, to grant, to all those who have departed this life in the Lord, the full remission of their indebtedness to his divine justice. To consider merely himself, is an impossibility to the Christian: how much less, in so sacred a solemnity, can he think only of himself, and omit his supplication that the merits of Christ, which outweigh the sins of the whole world, may likewise be appropriated by the souls in purgatory.

In the time of St. Bernard, a monk of Clairvaux appeared after his death to his brethren in religion, to thank them for having delivered him from purgatory. On being asked what had most contributed to free him from his torments, he led the inquirer to the Church, where a priest was saying Mass. "Look," said he, "this is the means by which my deliverance has been effected; this is the power of God's mercy; this is the salutary sacrifice which takes away the sins of the world." Indeed, so great is the efficacy of this sacrifice to obtain relief for the souls in purgatory, that the application of all the good works which have been performed from the beginning of the world would not afford so much assistance to one of these souls as is imparted by a single Mass. To illustrate



The blessed Henry Suso made an agreement with one of his brethren in religion that, as soon as either of them died, the survivor should say two Masses every week, for one year, for the repose of his soul. It came to pass that the religious with whom Henry had made this contract died first. Henry prayed every day for his deliverance from purgatory, but forgot to say the Masses which he had promised; whereupon, the deceased religious appeared to him with a sad countenance, and sharply rebuked him for his unfaithfulness to his engagement. Henry excused himself by saying that he had often prayed for him with great fervor, and had even offered up for him many penitential works. "O brother!" exclaimed the soul, "blood, blood is necessary to give me some relief and refreshment in my excruciating torments. Your penitential works, severe as they are, cannot deliver me. Nothing can do this but the blood of Jesus Christ, which is offered up in the sacrifice of the Mass. Masses! Masses!—these are what I need!"

We read of St. Gregory the Great, that he had Mass said for thirty days in succession for a deceased monk named Justin, who, according to a revelation, was detained in purgatory for having kept some money without permission. On the last day Justin appeared to his brother, telling him that he now was released from purgatory, after enduring intense torments. (Lib. iv, Dial., c. 55.)

St. Bernard tells us that the renowned Irish bishop, St. Malachy, had a sister who led rather a worldly life. After some time she fell sick and died. St. Malachy prayed for her every day during the holy sacrifice of the Mass. This he continued to do for a long time. At last, supposing that she was in heaven, he ceased praying for her. One

night, however, he had a strange dream or vision. It seemed to him that he saw his sister standing outside the graveyard. She looked pale and sad. She told him that she was famished with hunger, as she had tasted no food for thirty days. St. Malachy understood at once that the food of which she spoke was the holy sacrifice of the Mass, as he had not offered up the holy sacrifice for her during the previous thirty days. Next morning the saint began again to pray for his sister. After some time he saw her once more. She was now standing at the entrance of the church, but unable to enter. He continued to pray for her, and he saw her again. She was now in the church, but at some distance from the altar. He prayed with redoubled fervor, and at last, as he was standing at the altar, he beheld the soul of his sister quite near him. Her countenance was now beaming with heavenly joy, and she was surrounded by a multitude of blessed spirits. She thanked him for his prayers, after which she entered into the unutterable joys of heaven.

“My children,” said the Curé d’Ars one day, “you remember the story I have told you of that holy priest who was praying for his friend. God had, it appears, made known to him that he was in purgatory: it came into his mind that he could do nothing better than to offer the holy sacrifice of Mass for his soul. When he came to the moment of consecration, he took the sacred host in his hands, and said: ‘O holy and eternal Father! let us make an exchange. Thou hast the soul of my friend who is in purgatory, and I have the body of thy Son who is in my hands: well, do thou deliver my friend, and I offer thee thy Son, with all the merits of his death and passion.’ In fact, at the moment of the Elevation, he

saw the soul of his friend rising to heaven, all radiant with glory."

Now, let us do the same, after consecration, if we wish to obtain from God speedy relief for the souls in purgatory ; let us offer up to him his well-beloved Son, with all the merits of his death and passion. He will not be able to refuse our prayer. Indeed, if he heard the prayers of the Jews when they asked him anything in the name of his servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he will certainly hear a Christian who, during the celebration of the holy sacrifice of Mass, asks relief for the souls in purgatory in the name and through the merits of his well-beloved Son.

Now, those souls for whom we can procure relief in their pains, can also amply repay us for our charity, for they can pray and obtain for us God's blessing and protection in all the vicissitudes of our life. "It is true," says St. Alphonsus, "they are unable to pray or merit anything for themselves, yet, when they pray for others, they are heard by God. The reason is simply this. These souls are friends of God—they are spouses of Jesus Christ, to whom gratitude is as agreeable as ingratitude is hateful. How, then, could God turn a deaf ear to the prayers of gratitude sent up by the suffering souls? God hears such intercessions willingly ; nay, he not unfrequently allows the poor souls to assist their benefactors in a most striking manner, not merely in trifling matters, but in great necessities of body and soul. St. Gregory the Great relates, in his Dialogues, several miracles wrought at the intercession of the poor souls.

Whenever St. Catharine of Bologna wished to obtain a certain favor, she had recourse to the souls in purgatory, and her prayers were immediately heard. She declared

that, by praying to these holy souls, she obtained many favors, which she had sought through the intercession of the saints, but had not obtained.

In the year 1649 there lived at Cologne, in Germany, a certain bookseller, named Wm. Freyssen. One day his child was taken very sick. Several doctors were sent for, but could do nothing. The father of the child hastened to the church, and vowed at the altar to distribute one hundred copies of a little work on the souls of purgatory, written by the Rev. James P. Montfort, S. J. Full of confidence that the souls in purgatory would pray for the preservation of the life of his child, he returned home, and found his child considerably better, and, the day after, it was perfectly cured. Mr. Freyssen fulfilled his promise faithfully. Three weeks after, his wife was seized with a sudden illness. She trembled in every limb, fainted, and lost her speech; she grew worse and worse, and was given up by the doctors! The priest consoled her husband, and exhorted him to be resigned to the will of God, who evidently wished to take his wife to heaven. Mr. Freyssen did not give up hopes. In his utmost distress, he had again recourse to the souls in purgatory. He hastened to the church, and there, in the presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament, he vowed to distribute two hundred copies of Father Montfort's work on the souls in purgatory, if his wife should recover. On his way home he met one of his servants, who brought him the good news that his wife was out of danger. A few days after, she felt quite well, and went with her husband to church to thank God for her recovery. Mr. Freyssen kept his promise. (Jacq. Hautin, S. J.)

What a soothing satisfaction to the heart is not prayer



for the dead ! It changes tears, heretofore barren, into works of piety and mercy ; it causes our sorrow to be a succor to the object of our love, and makes it, therefore, less bitter ; it establishes and maintains, between ourselves and those who leave us, the most pleasing and salutary relations—a continual exchange of services and of precious help. Admirable relations between the living son and the departed father, between the mother and the daughter, the husband and the wife, between life and death ! While I share what I have to spare with the poor, God, to recompense me, will withdraw my father, my mother, my friend, from a place of suffering. That same penny which goes to give his daily bread to a poor sufferer, will perhaps give to a delivered soul a place for all eternity at the table of the Lord.

What heart does not thrill at such a thought ! Who among us does not see one of those most near and dear to us in life, appear to exhort us to the work of prayer and the labors of virtue ? Who does not exclaim, when watering with his tears the tomb of a beloved one : “ O beloved soul, whom so many virtues and good works have recommended to the clemency of the great Judge ! whom so many sufferings have so long tried and purified before my eyes ! whom a death, so very bitter indeed, but sanctified by religion and consoled by its hopes, has so quickly withdrawn from my embraces !—I hope for thy everlasting salvation from the divine goodness and merits of Jesus Christ : but I know not if it is yet consummated by thy entrance into glory. In this uncertainty I pray for thee, and I unite to my prayers the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which I daily offer upon his altar. My prayer made effectual by our Saviour’s blood relieves thee if thou art

still suffering ; it obtains for myself the favors of heaven in greater abundance. The remembrance of thee accompanies me everywhere ; the desire of hastening thy happiness urges me on, and unceasingly stimulates my zeal. I feel thee present, as it were, like a guardian angel, who at one time encourages me to prayer and good works, at another assures me of his prayers and assistance. Death has only brought our souls nearer to each other. Formerly I surrounded thee with my attentions, and was in turn the object of thy tenderest solicitude ; now I still love, and still am loved, and more than ever is my love capable of helping thee, and is itself repaid by thee."

What purity is there not in this love ! What holiness in the works which it imposes ! What a charm in the consolations it procures ! What a mysterious and holy association is that which unites in a community of mutual aid the visible and the invisible life, time and eternity : the just man who is still engaged in the combat, with him who is having his wounds healed in an exile that must soon end, and him who is already enjoying the glory and the triumph of heaven !

Here it may be asked whether Catholics living in mortal sin have any part in the spiritual blessings of the Church. Such Catholics as are not cut off from the Church by excommunication, are not excluded from the communion of saints ; for, though they are dead members, they still continue united to the Church and belong to her, but as the unnatural and ungrateful children of a tender and loving mother. This loving mother, despite their ingratitude and disloyalty, still preserves for them a tender affection ; and if, on account of their sins, they are deprived of spiritual blessings, such as sanctifying grace and the benefits of

indulgences, which can be enjoyed only by just souls, they still have a share in those ineffable *groanings* mentioned by St. Paul, which are continually sent up towards heaven, not only for the just, that they may persevere in grace, but also for sinners, that they may be *converted* and live.

The sacrifice of the Mass is offered up for them as well as for the most fervent Christians; the saints reigning in heaven cease not to intercede in their favor with the Father of mercies, that they may recover the life of grace which they have lost by sin; and it only remains for them to have recourse to those means which Jesus Christ has instituted and intrusted to his Church for the remission of sins. "Weep and mourn," says St. Ambrose to those Christians who had the misfortune of falling into crime and sin; "and if your repentance be not enough to purify you, considering the grievousness of your faults, the Church, your mother, shall supply your want by her groans and prayers, and will, by her tears, restore you to life." Oh! how deplorable is the state of that soul which is in sin! It is deprived of the most precious gifts of the communion of saints.

As to those who do not belong to the Roman Catholic Church, they have no part in the communion of saints. In order that a branch should receive sap from the root of the tree, it must be united to the trunk. So, too, in order to have a part in the communion of saints, it is necessary that we be united to the Church. For this reason, infidels, Jews, heretics, schismatics, and all persons excommunicated, have no part in the communion of saints.

Infidels and Jews have no part in the communion of saints, because they never belonged to the Church: infidels being pagans or idolaters, who do not worship the

true God, but adore creatures, as the sun, the moon, etc.; the Jews, because they refuse to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah promised by God and foretold by the prophets.

Heretics are deprived of the communion of saints, because they have separated from the Church, and obstinately continue attached to erroneous doctrines which the Church has condemned. For example, Luther and Calvin, with their followers, deny the real presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament, reject the sacraments of confirmation, penance, extreme unction, matrimony, and profess many other errors. Schismatics have also no part in the communion of saints, because they have been guilty of *schism*, or a separation from the holy Roman Catholic Church. They will not recognize the pope as the head of the Church; neither will they obey his authority, nor that of the other legitimate pastors. They form a society of their own, apart from the society of the Church; and on that account they are rejected from her bosom, and are deprived of the communion of saints.

Excommunicated persons are another class who enjoy not the advantages of the communion of saints; for, although Christians and children of the Church, they remain deprived of her spiritual blessings until they shall correct the grievous faults for which they have been excommunicated. The Church excludes them from being present at the holy sacrifice; she deprives them of the holy Eucharist, of other sacraments, of public prayers, even of Christian burial, if they continue obstinate until death. The excommunicated are, too, deprived of the advantages of the society of the faithful as long as they remain bound by the censure of excommunication. The Church will not allow of their holding companionship with



her faithful children, for they are rotten branches, isolated, proscribed with ignominy, loaded with disgrace, and held aloof like those infected with leprosy.

From what has been said on the communion of saints, we easily see, in the first place, the necessity of praying fervently for all those who are out of the Church, that God may enlighten their understandings and touch their hearts; in the second place, the necessity of always rendering God thanks for the grace given us of belonging to that Church in which are found so many advantages; in the third place, the inutility to a Christian of belonging to the body of the Church, if he be not animated with the spirit of Jesus Christ; and in the fourth place, the shame we should feel at being so eager for earthly goods, and so remiss in laboring for spiritual blessings.

## THE TENTH ARTICLE.

### **1. Which is the tenth article of the creed?**

*“The forgiveness of sins.”*

There is a man who, of his own free will, has made himself a slave of sin, a slave of the devil. Who shall free him from the bonds of sin and hell, and open to him the gates of heaven? Who shall transform him from a slave of the devil to a child of God? Shall we call upon the angels and the saints of heaven? The saints of heaven are the friends of God, and God honors them by hearing their prayers. They may pray for the sinner, they may obtain for him great graces, but they cannot free him from a single sin. Neither St. Michael the Archangel, nor the guardian angel, nor even the Blessed Mother of God, has power to forgive even one single venial sin.

Although the power of forgiving sin has not been invested in any of the saints of heaven, yet this great power has been left by Christ to his Church on earth. Hence, the question and answer:

### **2. What is meant by the tenth article of the creed?**

*That in the Catholic Church there is forgiveness of sins, and of the punishments due to them.*

It is fitting to remember here that this power of forgiving sins was given by God the Father to Jesus Christ, even as man. In the Gospel of St. Matthew (xviii, 18), we read that Jesus Christ said: “All power is given to me in heaven

and on earth." By saying, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me," he plainly gives us to understand that he had also received from his heavenly Father the power of forgiving sins; and that he had this same power even as man, is clearly implied in the words, "is given to me." Had our Saviour, when he uttered this, considered himself as God, he could not have said, "is given to me," because, as God, he already had this power of himself. He spoke as man, then, when he said, "All power is given to me;" and as man he could and did receive from his heavenly Father the power of forgiving sins. He even proved it by a miracle, when some Scribes called this power of his into doubt. When the people brought to our Lord a man sick of the palsy, he said to the sick man: "Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee." Then some of the Scribes said within themselves, "He blasphemeth," thinking, as Protestants do, that God alone could forgive sins. But then our divine Saviour, wishing to show them that he, "even as man," had received power from his heavenly Father to forgive sins; wrought a great miracle in confirmation of this truth. He said: "But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, then he saith to the man sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house: and the multitude, seeing it, feared and glorified God, who had given such power to men." (Matt. ix, 2.)

Now, this power which Jesus Christ as man had was again delegated by him to other men, that is, to St. Peter and the rest of the apostles. This he did, in the most solemn manner, on the very day of his resurrection. On Easter-Sunday night the apostles were assembled in the supper-room in Jerusalem. They had the doors and

windows firmly barred and bolted, for they feared the Jews might break in on them and drag them to prison. Suddenly, Jesus himself stood in their midst, and saluted them with the sweet words, "Peace be with you." The apostles were afraid, for they thought they saw a ghost. Jesus encouraged them, and bade them touch him: "See my hands and feet," he said, "it is I myself; feel and see: a ghost has no flesh and bones as I." The apostles trembled with joy and wonder, and still hesitated. Jesus then told them to give him something to eat, and he ate with them, and then they saw clearly that he was risen from the dead. Our divine Saviour now said to them: "Peace be with you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" (John xx, 21); that is, with the same powers with which I, as man, am sent by my Father, I also send you as my delegates, as the pastors of my Church. And that there might not be the least doubt that in these words of his he included the power of forgiving sins,—nay, to show in an especial manner that this power was included, he immediately breathed upon the apostles, and said to them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John xx, 22, 23.) Here, in the clearest terms, Jesus Christ gives his apostles the power of forgiving sins, in such a manner that, when they here on earth exercise this power by passing sentence of forgiveness over a penitent sinner, their sentence is ratified in heaven, and the sins of the penitent are actually forgiven.

Mark well the words: "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them." No man who really loves the truth can find any other meaning in these words than their plain



and natural meaning. Those words may be examined in any grammar or dictionary of the English language, in any language at all, in the Syro-Chaldaic, in the very language our divine Saviour spoke ; and, if we are sincere, we shall, we can, find no other meaning in them than their natural and obvious meaning : “ Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them.” What plainer words could our Saviour have used, what other words could we ourselves use, to express the fact that the apostles really received the power of forgiving sins ?

Suppose the Emperor of Russia were to send an ambassador to this country, and, giving him full power to act as plenipotentiary, would say to him : “ Whatsoever conditions you agree to, I also agree to them ; and whatsoever conditions you reject, I also do reject them.” Would not such language be clear and explicit enough ? Would not every one see that this ambassador was invested with the same power as the emperor himself ? Now, this is precisely the language of our divine Saviour to his apostles : “ Whatsoever sins you shall forgive, I also forgive them ; and whatsoever sins you refuse to forgive, I also refuse to forgive them.”

When God formed the first man out of the slime of the earth, he breathed into his face the breath of life, and that instant man became a living soul, a living image of God. Now, also, God breathes upon his apostles the breath of life, and that very instant they became, not merely images of God, for they were that already, but really gods, as it were, having all power in heaven and on earth. “ As the living Father hath sent me, so do I also send you.” The heavenly Father had sent Jesus Christ to forgive sins, and to transmit this power to others ; and Jesus, in like

manner, sends his apostles with the power to forgive sins, and to transmit this power to their successors.

When sin and its eternal punishment have been forgiven, there often remain temporal punishments to be undergone either in this life or in purgatory. These temporal punishments are obstacles that hinder our entrance into heaven. But Christ endowed his Church also with the power to remove these obstacles. This power is evidently contained in the large concession made by our Lord, in these words: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. xvi, 19, and xviii, 18); and: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Ibid. xvi, 19.)

### **3. What sins can be forgiven in the Catholic Church?**

*All sins, without exception.*

The exercise of the power of forgiving sins is not restricted to any particular sins; for, no crime, however heinous, can be committed which the Church has not power to forgive. Hence there is no sinner, however abandoned, however depraved, who should not confidently hope for pardon, provided he sincerely repents of his past sins. Neither is the exercise of this power restricted to particular times; for, whenever the sinner turns from his evil ways, he is not to be rejected, as we learn from the reply of our Lord to the Prince of the Apostles, asking how often we should pardon an offending brother, whether seven times? "Not only seven times," says our dear Lord, "but even seventy times seven." (Matt. xviii, 21, 22.)

**4. To whom has Christ given power to forgive sins?**

*To the apostles and their lawful successors, the bishops and priests of his Church.*

Our divine Saviour came on earth to forgive the sins of all men; but he was not to live always here on earth, and consequently he had to leave this power to his successors, the apostles. The apostles, too, for the same reason, had to transmit this power to their successors, the bishops and priests; and this power must necessarily remain in the Church as long as there are sins to be forgiven.

This is one of the most consoling articles of faith,—one that we should firmly believe when we say, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” Indeed, the priest raises his hand, he pronounces the words of absolution, and in an instant, quick as a flash of light, the chains of hell are burst asunder, and the sinner becomes a child of God. So great is the power of the priest, that the judgments of heaven itself are subject to his decision: the priest absolves on earth, and God absolves in heaven. “Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Matt. xviii, 18.) These are the ever-memorable words which Jesus Christ addressed to the apostles and to their successors in the priesthood.

Suppose that our Saviour himself were to come down from heaven, and were to appear here in our midst; suppose he were to enter one of the confessionals to hear confessions. Now, let a priest enter another confessional, for the same purpose. Suppose that two sinners go to confession, both equally well disposed, equally contrite. Let one of these go to the priest, and the other to our Saviour himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ says to the sinner that

comes to him, "I absolve thee from thy sins;" and the priest says to the sinner that goes to him, "I absolve thee from thy sins;" and the absolution of the priest will be just as valid, just as powerful, as the absolution of Jesus Christ himself.

At the end of the world Jesus Christ will himself judge all men: "For the Father judges no one, but he has left all judgment to his divine Son." But as long as this world lasts, Jesus Christ has left all judgment to his priests. He has vested them with his own authority, with his own power. "He that heareth you," he says, "heareth me." He has given them his own divine Spirit: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whosoever sins you shall retain, they are retained."

The priest is the ambassador, the plenipotentiary, of God. He is the coöperator, the assistant, of God in the work of redemption. This is no exaggeration, it is the inspired language of the apostle: "*Dei adjutores sumus*:" "We are the coöperators, the assistants, of God." It is to the priest that God speaks when he says, "Judge between me and my people:" "*Judica inter me et vineam meam*." "This man," says God, speaking to the priest, "is a sinner; he has offended me grievously; I could judge him myself, but I leave this judgment to your decision. I will forgive him as soon as you grant him forgiveness. He is my enemy, but I will admit him to my friendship as soon as you declare him worthy. I will open the gates of heaven to him as soon as you free him from the chains of sin and hell."



**5. By what sacraments are sins forgiven ?**

*Chiefly by baptism and penance.*

The means by which the power of forgiving sins is exercised, and forgiveness applied to our souls, are, chiefly, the sacraments of baptism and penance. The sacrament of baptism remits original sin, and also all actual sins committed before the reception of this sacrament; and that so effectually, that adults, who receive it with the requisite dispositions, are forgiven not only the sins committed, but also all temporal punishment due to them. In the sacrament of penance are forgiven all those sins which are committed after baptism. However, the power of forgiving sins intrusted to the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church is a judicial power, which they cannot exercise indiscriminately, but must first consider the merits of the case, and the dispositions of those who apply for the remission of their sins. Christ, in saying to the apostles, *Whose sins you shall retain, they are retained; and whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven*, constituted them judges of our souls in regard to our sins; so that they are to take full cognizance of the cause before they pronounce sentence, that they may act with justice and prudence, *forgiving and not forgiving, loosing and not loosing*, the bonds of sin, according to the disposition of sinners.

This power conferred on the pastors of the Church is not an arbitrary power, not a power that they can exercise as custom, caprice, passion, or ignorance may suggest. Pastors, according to St. Paul, are *the dispensers of the mysteries of God*, they are the stewards of the riches of his mercy; and the trust committed to them they are bound to fulfil, without either too much indulgence or too

much severity. So great is the necessity of exercising this power with discretion, that the words of absolution pronounced over a sinner not duly disposed produce no effect ; for, though the priest says, "*I absolve thee*," God does not ratify the sentence of absolution in heaven, but rather pronounces his condemnation on the false penitent ; that is to say, a penitent who is not truly sorry for his sins, and is not willing to give up the occasions of sin and to amend his life. We can never thank Almighty God enough for having granted this power to his Church. But let us be wise, and let us be wise in time, that is, let us confess our sins in time ; for, in the world to come, there is no one to hear our confession and give us absolution—not even the apostles can do so. It is only in this world that we can find a created being who has power to forgive the sinner, who can free him from the chains of sin and hell ; and that extraordinary being is the *priest*, the Catholic priest. "Who can forgive sins except God?" was the question which the Pharisees sneeringly asked. "Who can forgive sins?" is the question which the Pharisees of the present day also ask ; and the answer is : There *is* a man on earth that can forgive sins, and *that* man is the Catholic priest.

## THE ELEVENTH ARTICLE.

### **1. Which is the eleventh article of the Creed?**

*“The resurrection of the body.”*

Man is created to live forever. It is true, man must die, but it is only his body that is doomed to the grave, and that only for a time. Death does not destroy man, it only separates the soul from the body for a certain number of years; after which time Almighty God will raise him again to life to hear his eternal fate.

The Prophet Ezechiel was one day carried in spirit to the midst of a plain of boundless extent. He there beheld heaps of bones without number, scattered throughout that vast plain. Then God spoke to the prophet: “Command these bones, speak to them in my name: command them to arise.” The prophet spoke; and in a moment a strange sight presented itself to his eyes. The dead bones began to move; they flew apart; they joined together with a horrible clatter; the nerves and muscles grew on the bones, and in a moment they were covered with flesh and skin; the spirit of God breathed upon them from the four ends of the earth, and they sprang to their feet. In a moment the whole earth was swarming with living human beings.

It was thus that God showed to the prophet how bodies that had commingled with other substances and turned into dust, could be brought back into existence. Indeed, since the beginning of the world, not an atom of matter has

ever been lost or destroyed. The substance of matter never perishes; the substance of our bodies is not destroyed.

Our Lord, who created our bodies, who causes them to return to dust, can also restore these bodies. As God brought our body and the whole world itself out of nothing, so he can and will also bring back that body out of the dust. This is our firm belief, which we express in the eleventh article: "(I believe in) the resurrection of the body."

## **2. What means the resurrection of the body ?**

*That we shall rise with our bodies at the day of judgment.*

Before the resurrection takes place, all men will die, says St. Alphonsus; for this is asserted in many passages of Holy Scripture. "As by one man," says St. Paul, "sin entered into this world, and by sin, death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned." (Rom. v, 12.) "It is appointed unto men once to die." (Ibid. ix, 27.) "Who is the man that shall live, and not see death?" (Ps. lxxxviii, 49.) All, then, shall die, because death is the punishment of sin; but all have sinned in Adam, except Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, as theologians commonly hold, and therefore all must die. And why should any one be exempt from death, when even Jesus and Mary have died, although they had not contracted the guilt of Adam's sin?

All men, then, who will be found alive at the end of the world, shall be deprived of life by the fire which will burn the earth and all things in it. This fire, says St. Thomas, will kill sinners in a painful manner, but will, by the divine power, deprive the just of life without pain, or



with a degree of pain proportioned to the faults which they have to expiate. This countless multitude of souls will then be summoned to undergo the particular judgment which is appointed to all men at the hour of their death. When this numerous company of souls shall have been judged, the general resurrection will take place.

The pagan philosophers denied the resurrection of the body, because they thought it impossible. This was also the doctrine of the Sadducees, a Jewish sect, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles (xxiii, 8). But the resurrection of the body is one of our articles of faith. It is called the resurrection of the body, because, since men die only according to the body, they can rise only in the body. This truth is proved by many passages of the Old as well as of the New Testament. "I know," says Job, "that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise again; and in my flesh I shall see my God, whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold." (Job xix, 25-27.) "Thou, indeed," said the Machabees to King Antiochus, "O most wicked man! destroyest us out of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up . . . in the resurrection of eternal life." (2 Mach. vii, 9.)

"The hour cometh," says Jesus Christ, "wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John v, 28, 29.)

"Our body," says St. Paul, "is sown in corruption (that is, a corruptible body is put in the earth) but it shall rise in incorruption." (1 Cor. xv, 43.) Nature seems to be dead during winter, but again, as it were by a resurrection, resumes its verdure in spring. So our bodies, too, shall be,

for a time, lying in their graves and return to dust, but they will rise again on the last day.

"By a special privilege," says St. Alphonsus, "some have already risen from the dead, as the Church thinks of the Mother of God. That she has received this privilege, we are assured by St. Epiphanius, St. John Damascene, St. Thomas, Nicephorus and others, quoted by Baronius (A. D. 48). With these authors all theologians agree; so that to hold the contrary cannot be excused from the note of temerity." St. Thomas holds the same, as probable, of St. John the Evangelist; and, as still more probable, of the saints that rose with Christ. Of these St. Matthew says: "And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose" (xxvii, 52). As these few have already risen, so, also, all the rest of mankind will rise in their own bodies, and in the places where the remains of their bodies, or the greater part of them, are found.

### **3. Why shall our bodies rise united to our soul?**

*That they may share in the soul's everlasting reward or punishment.*

St. Thomas gives many reasons to show the congruity of the resurrection. (Sup. 3 p., qu. 75, art 3.) "But to me," says St. Alphonsus in his Moral Dissertations, "the principal one appears to be this: beatitude is the last end of men, but beatitude cannot be attained in this life; the Lord therefore has ordained that men should enjoy it forever in the next. But man would not enjoy complete beatitude if the soul were not again to be united to the body. For, since the body is a part of human nature, the soul without the body would be only a part of man, and not the entire man. Hence man naturally desires the complete

perfection of his beatitude ; without it, his desire would not be perfectly satiated."

Another reason assigned by St. Thomas for the general resurrection is, that the resurrection of the body has been destined by God, in order that all the good and the wicked may be judged, and that each may receive a reward in soul and body, proportioned to his merits and demerits. As our bodies participated with our souls in the virtues which we practised, and all the good works which we performed during life here below, it is only just that they should participate in the recompense which the souls shall receive in their glorious resurrection, in their triumphant ascension into heaven, and in their eternal happiness. On the other hand, as the bodies of the wicked participated with the souls in the commission of crime, in the violation of God's commandments, it is just that they should be sharers in the soul's everlasting torments. "We must all appear," says St. Paul, "before the judgment of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." (2 Cor. v, 10.) The resurrection, however, will not be a natural effect ; for, in nature, there is no active power to produce the resurrection : and St. Thomas says that, without revelation, reason cannot demonstrate the possibility of the resurrection. The resurrection of the body, therefore, is altogether supernatural and miraculous, as the fathers of the Church and all theologians commonly teach.

In the general resurrection, says St. Alphonsus, the remains of our bodies shall be collected by the divine command, and shall be prepared for the formation of human bodies, that from them may be formed the members and

bodies of all. St. Thomas, St. Augustine and St. Gregory add that these two operations will be performed by the ministry of angels, partly by their natural power, and partly by a divine and supernatural power. The arrangement of all the organs of each body, and of all the parts which it formerly had, as also the reunion of the souls and bodies, through the humanity of Christ, will be effected by the operation of God alone.

When, on the last day, the sun, the moon, and the stars shine no more, the rivers run no more, the winds blow no more, the towns and villages, the houses and churches, have disappeared, lands and gardens are all in ruins; when all is dead, all is reduced to ashes; when the whole earth is one vast solitude; when over all reigns the solemn stillness of the grave, all on a sudden, the solemn stillness will be broken. Christ will give a common signal for the resurrection of all men. "In a moment," writes St. Paul, "in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible." (1 Cor. xv, 52.) The Lord, by his divine power, will make this voice heard in all places, for this voice will be his own all-powerful voice: "The Lord himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead who are in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. iv, 15.) This voice of the archangel will be the same as that of the Son of God, because the archangel will utter it by the command of Christ; for the apostle says, "with commandment and the voice of an archangel." What shall this voice of the archangel be? St. Thomas says it will be the words commonly ascribed to St. Jerome: "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment." According to the common opinion,



this archangel will be St. Michael, who is called by excellence *the* archangel, because he is the prince of the heavenly host, and probably will be appointed at the last judgment to distribute among the inferior angels the offices which they shall then have to discharge.

#### **4. How shall the bodies of the saints rise?**

*They will be glorious and immortal.*

The elect, says St. Thomas, shall all rise in bodies of the size and vigor suited to the perfect age of man; that is, in the state of a human body perfectly formed and free from all defect. This is according to what St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians (iv, 13): "Until we all meet in the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ." Hence St. Augustine says that each person shall rise with the stature he had in his juvenile age, or which he should have had, had he attained that age; and that what shall be deficient in the old, on account of their advanced age, or in children, on account of their youth, shall be supplied by the divine power, so that they shall have the stature which they had, or would have had, in their juvenile age. "It is sown," says St. Paul, "a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body . . . the second man from heaven, heavenly." (1 Cor. xv, 44-47.) At present the human body is an animal body, wherefore, to preserve its life on this earth, it is necessary to nourish it with earthly food; but, after the resurrection, the body shall rise spiritual, because, in the next world, its life shall be preserved by the spirit, without the aid of material food. Hence it is said of the elect, that they shall be heavenly men, because by glory they shall be made like to the angels.

The qualities with which the bodies of the saints shall

be endowed, are four. The first is *impassibility*. Here, on earth, we suffer from heat and cold, from hunger and thirst; we suffer from weariness and pain, from sickness, from sadness of heart; we suffer from all the ills of this weary life, and, finally, we shall have to undergo the agonies of death. But, after we have risen from the dead, we shall suffer no more pain, no more sadness of any kind; for then our bodies are endowed with the quality of impassibility, which will exempt them not only from death and corruption, but from all injury, so that, were they placed in the flames of hell, neither the fire nor the devils could cause them any pain. As in heaven, says St. Thomas, the soul is perfectly subject to God, so the body is perfectly subject to the soul. For this reason, no force can weaken the subjection of the body to the soul, and therefore no violence can inflict any injury on a glorified body.

The second quality of a glorified body is *subtility*. In this life, our body is composed of gross matter. But after its resurrection it shall be refined, subtile, gifted with the qualities of a spirit. It will be able to pass through the wall, through the hardest stone, as a sunbeam passes through glass. This quality exempts the body from all grossness, so that the soul shall govern the body as if it were spiritual, not because it will become a spiritual or aerial body, but because it will be perfectly obedient to the soul.

The third quality will be *agility*. In this life our body is heavy and wearisome, we need rest, we can move only slowly from place to place. But, after the resurrection, our body will be *agile*. By this property the soul will be able to move the body, whithersoever and in whatever manner she pleases, with a most quick and almost imperceptible

motion ; she will be able to move the body from place to place more swiftly than the wind, more suddenly than the lightning. Hence St. Paul says : “ It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power.” (1 Cor. xv, 43.)

The fourth quality of a glorified body will be *glory* or *brightness*. In the present life we are perhaps unnoticed and despised, because we are not gifted with beauty. But let us wait and have patience. Only a few years more of sorrow and trial, only a few years more of humiliation and generous self-denial, and our body shall be bright and beautiful as an angel of God ; it shall send forth in every direction a wonderful light, which, says St. Thomas, though far brighter than that of the sun, shall not injure the sight, but shall delight it. This quality the apostle sometimes calls glory, sometimes brightness.

“ He will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory.” (Phil. iii, 21.) Again : “ It is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory.” (1 Cor. xv, 43.) This glory is a sort of refulgence reflected from the supreme happiness of the soul—an emanation of the bliss which it enjoys, and which beams through the body. This quality therefore is communicated to the body, in proportion as the soul itself is rendered happy by a participation of the happiness of God. Hence, unlike the former, this quality is not common to all in the same degree. All the bodies of the saints shall, it is true, be equally impassible, but the brightness of all shall not be the same ; for, according to the apostle : “ One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars, for star differeth from star in glory : so also is the resurrection of the dead.” (1 Cor. xv, 41, 42.)

Hence it is that the Catholic Church shows such respect

to the tombs and cemeteries of the dead, blesses and consecrates them with so many beautiful ceremonies, plants on each grave the cross, the symbol of hope, and encourages the living to visit often and deck with flowers and garlands the tombs of their departed friends, and especially to offer up their prayers for the dead on the very spot where their bodies await the moment of their final resurrection.

**5. Are the bodies of the damned also to be glorious?**

*No ; but they will be immortal, most hideous and frightful.*

1. The bodies of the damned shall rise entire, as they had been in this life.

2. They shall be incorruptible or immortal. They are rendered incorruptible by the divine power, and their incorruptibility will serve the divine justice, that, living forever, they may be punished forever.

3. The bodies of the damned shall be passible in the animal senses, says St. Thomas. The bodies of the damned, then, shall rise in a manner suitable to what they have deserved, that is, hideous, and in every way loathsome and insupportable. All those vices and filthy passions to which they were subject during life, will be depicted on their countenances on the last day. Bodies which, during life, had been pampered and indulged, surfeited, debauched, and defiled with filthy and abominable crimes, shall rise up from their graves with frightful looks, distorted features, and convulsed limbs. And this is only as it should be ; for, as these bodies had been subservient to the souls in the commission of crime, it is only just that the marks of crime should be borne by them, and that they should bear clear testimony to the vices in which they were sharers.



The bodies of the damned shall "rise immortal," indeed, but not glorified as the bodies of the saints; they shall rise "immortal," but only to suffer forever the torments of the damned; to be consigned forever to the dark prison of hell, and "to live forever in eternal flames."

Hence St. Paul says: "All shall indeed rise again, but not all shall be changed," *i. e.*, glorified. (1 Cor. xv, 51.)

## THE TWELFTH ARTICLE.

### 1. Which is the twelfth article of the creed?

*“And life everlasting.”*

This article, “life everlasting,” is placed last in the Apostles’ Creed, inasmuch as “life everlasting” is the reward of our belief, and the crown of our labors on earth. This short life is, indeed, only a preparation for the long and eternal life on which we shall soon enter. The few years of this mortal life will pass quickly away, but the life which is to come will have no end. In fact, it is for this eternal life that God has made us; and he has only placed us here, as he placed Adam and Eve in the garden of paradise, to make trial of us, and to fit us for the life which is to come.

### 2. What does this article mean?

*That the good shall live happy forever in heaven.*

Every king of this world possesses a palace from which his power goes forth; he ennobles his palace, and his palace ennobles him: he ennobles his palace, by raising the city in which he resides to be the metropolis of his kingdom; and his palace ennobles him, because the magnificence of the buildings, the splendor of his court and of his guards, are signs of his power and grandeur.

Almighty God is the King of heaven and earth. Although it be true of him that he is everywhere, yet it is also true that there is a place which, in a certain sense, is

his particular dwelling-place, called *heaven*. "You shall not swear by the *heaven*, for it is the throne of God," said our divine Saviour. It is also said in the Gospel that, whenever our Saviour prayed, or blessed his followers, he raised his eyes towards *heaven*. He also often said: "My Father and your Father, who is in *heaven*;" and he commands us to pray: "Our Father who art in *heaven*." Again, in the Acts of the Apostles, we read that, when our Lord Jesus Christ returned to *heaven*, he ascended beyond the clouds. He declared that "in his Father's *house* there were many mansions:" in a word, faith and revelation assure us that the kingdom of heaven is a real place of boundless extent, and that it lies far beyond the starry firmament.

No one can speak worthily of heaven but he that has seen it. It would require an angel, a bright angel of heaven, in order to describe to us its beauties. St. Paul was taken up in spirit to the third heaven, and he there beheld a faint glimpse of its unutterable beauty. He declares that no eye has seen it, no ear has heard it, and it has never entered into the heart of man to conceive the sweetness of its joys and the greatness of its beauty.

O God! how beautiful must heaven be! What beautiful sights do we not behold in this world, and yet we have never yet seen anything like the beauties of heaven! What sweet sounds, what delicious harmonies, do we not sometimes hear in this life, and yet we have never heard anything like the harmonies of the blessed in heaven!

How great, how manifold, how boundless are our desires, and yet it has never, never yet entered our hearts to desire anything like the beauties, the joys, of heaven! Yes, yes, I repeat it—no eye has seen it, nor ear has heard it,

it has never entered into the heart of man to conceive the greatness of those joys which God has in store for those that love and serve him.

### 3. In what does life everlasting consist

*It consists in the most intimate union of the soul with God, who is the inexhaustible source of all bliss and happiness.*

In heaven, God rewards both the body and the soul of him who has served him faithfully here below. All the senses of the saints will be rewarded according to the degrees of mortification which they practised. 1. The saints shall be delighted in the sense of vision. Even in this world we behold many marvellous beauties. Those who have ever travelled through the woods and prairies of the sunny South, must have noticed with delight the many fair flowers that bloom there. Whilst gazing on their delicate tints and on their beautiful forms, they cannot help exclaiming : " Truly, the proudest monarch in all his glory was never arrayed like one of these." And yet all their beauty is but darkness when compared with the beauty of *heaven*.

There is a solemn beauty in a vast forest with its lofty trees and its cool shade. There all is calm and peaceful. In that deep solitude nought is heard save the warbling of birds, or the gentle murmur of the brook mingling with the distant roar of the waterfall, and the whisper of the wind as it ruffles the forest leaves.

There is a beauty in the boundless ocean. Sometimes it is lashed into fury by the storm, and then its surging waves, as they glitter in the sunlight, look like mountains of crystal, whose summits are sparkling with showers of pearls. Then, again, the ocean sleeps as calmly and gently



as an infant's slumber, and, like the child's pure soul, its calm bosom reflects the bright hues of heaven. The whole earth is beautiful. There is a beauty in its snow-capped mountains as they tower above the clouds in solemn grandeur. There is a beauty in the widespread, sloping valleys as they bloom with thousands of flowers, or smile with a golden harvest. There is a beauty in the dawn as it paints the eastern sky with the richest hues. There is a beauty in the brightness of the noonday sun. There is a touching beauty in the summer sunset, when the clouds are fringed with gold and purple, whilst the pale moon rises in calm majesty above the horizon, and the twinkling stars appear one by one, like silvery lamps hung out on the dark-blue vault of heaven.

If, then, *this* earth, even now in its fallen state, is yet so marvellously beautiful, what must be the beauty of heaven! If there is so much beauty in this *prison of death*, what beauty must there be in the *land of the living*! If this place of *banishment* is so admirable, how admirable must it be in our *heavenly home*! If this *valley of tears*, this *abode of sin* and sorrow and malediction, has yet so many beauties, O how exceedingly beautiful must be that paradise of delights, where sin and pain and sorrow are never known!

But how shall I express the joy which the blessed soul experiences when she meets once more those beloved ones with whom she parted with such sad regret?

Some years ago a vessel was returning home after a cruise of many years. As soon as they neared the coast, not only the passengers, but even the sailors on board, were filled with unutterable joy. They had been absent for many long years, and, as soon as they caught the first

glimpse of their native land, they became incapable of doing any more work. The nearer they drew, the more excited they became. Some stood all alone, talking to themselves; others laughed, others wept for very joy. They stood gazing at their native land, unable to turn away their eyes. They seemed never to weary of gazing at the verdure of the hills, the foliage of the trees, the rocks on the shore covered with moss and sea-weed. Each of these objects was dear, was sacred in their eyes. It was their home—their native land. They saw the steeples of the villages in which they were born; they knew them, though at a distance, and the sight filled them with unbounded joy. At length, when the ship entered the harbor, when they saw on shore their fathers, their mothers, their wives and children, their brothers and sisters, their friends, stretching out their hands to them, laughing and weeping for joy, and calling them by name,—ah! then it was impossible to keep a single man of them on board. They all leaped on shore, and the crew of another ship had to be employed to do the work of the vessel.

If the joy of these poor men was so great on returning to their home, to their native land—ah! how great, how unutterably great, will be the joy of the soul when she enters her true home forever! How unutterably great will be her joy when she meets and sees again those beloved ones from whom she has been parted through so many weary years of grief and pain! Persons have been known to die of joy; and in truth, if ever the soul *could* die, she would die then of excessive joy.

Some years ago a young man was forced to quit his native land and his beloved parents, to seek his fortune in this country. He loved his parents, and he loved his

home dearly, and indeed the parting was a sad one. But *his* was not that weak love which dies away as soon as it is borne to a foreign clime. Every wave of the ocean, every hour of time, that widened the separation between him and his parents, only increased and strengthened his love. After many years of patient toil, the young man succeeded in amassing considerable wealth. His first care, now, was to send for his aged father, who was yet living, and whom he had never forgotten. The money was sent, and the answer came. The day and the vessel were named on which the father was to embark. O how many a restless hour of joyous expectation and of cruel disappointment by turns cheered and saddened the heart of the young man! At last the glad tidings came—the ship had arrived. His aged father was on board. The son hastened, he flew, rather, to the vessel. One moment more, and father and son were locked in each other's arms. O what a moment of wild joy for the son! All the sad and joyous memories of the past—his father's love, the farewell kiss, the parting tear, the long, weary years of separation—all came rushing into his soul, and choked his voice. But, alas! the joy was too great for his loving heart: his heart broke, and he died of excessive joy,—died in his father's arms.

If any one has loved dearly—if any one has loved in truth, and has lost the object of all his affections—*then*, and only *then*, will he understand the joy of such a meeting. There we shall meet and see again a loving mother, whom we have learned to love and esteem in truth only when we have lost her. There we shall meet again a fond father, a loving brother or sister. There we shall meet and see again those beloved ones whose absence

we have mourned through long, weary years of pain and sorrow. We shall meet them again, we shall embrace them, we shall press them to our hearts, and God shall wipe away every tear and heal every broken heart. And we shall love them without fear of separation, we shall love and possess them for ever and ever.

And there we shall meet, there we shall see, that most pure, that best of mothers. O what a joyous thought ! There we shall see, for the first time, that most loving Mother who has loved us with undying love, in spite of *all* our ingratitude. We shall kiss those blessed hands that have been so often stretched out to save us whilst we were straying away on the brink of the precipice. There we shall gaze on those loving eyes that wept for us at the foot of the cross, that smiled with joy when we returned to the path of innocence and virtue. There we shall gaze upon that blessed face, which is the delight of Jesus, the delight of the blessed in heaven. We shall hear the loving voice of our holy Mother Mary, and we shall hear from her lips the sweet words : " Welcome, my child, welcome home at last ! " O my dear reader ! it were well worth whole long years of grief and pain to have the joy of such a welcome !

And there we shall see Jesus, our Saviour and our God. We shall see him in all his glory. We shall see that blessed face on which the angels long to gaze ; we shall see his sacred heart burning with unutterable love ; we shall see his blessed wounds shining with dazzling brightness.

If heaven, if the angels and saints, are so beautiful, how beautiful must be Jesus himself, the King, the Creator, of heaven ! St. Peter was one day taken up to the summit of Mount Thabor, and he there beheld a faint glimpse of our dear Lord's unutterable beauty. There Jesus was



transfigured, and his face shone more brightly than the sun, and his garments were whiter than snow. St. Peter was so overjoyed at the sight of this ravishing beauty, that he cried aloud, in a rapturous transport: "O Lord! it is good for us to be here!" And he wished forthwith to dwell upon Mount Thabor forever. Ah, how shall we cry aloud for joy when we behold the unveiled beauty of Jesus in all his ravishing splendor! "O Lord!" we shall cry, "it is good for us to be here. Let us dwell here forever."

The ears of the elect will be delighted by the melodious voices of the saints singing the celestial praises of God. "The high praises of God," says holy David, "shall be in their mouths." (Ps. cxlix, 6.) The voice of one will not interfere with the voice of the others: each one will be heard as distinctly as if he sang alone. But what shall I say of the music of heaven? What of that melody that ravishes the soul on her entrance into paradise? Even here on earth, music has such wondrous power that it can melt the sternest hearts, and calm the wildest passions. The celebrated Italian musician, Alexandro Stradella, had the misfortune to give offence to a whole family of Rome. The haughty nobles determined to have revenge. They hired a band of assassins to waylay the musician on his return from church, and to murder him. On the appointed evening they came to the church. Alexandro, little dreaming of any danger, entered the choir, and began to play and sing a most sweet and touching melody. He had just composed the piece, and he was now playing it for the first time. "*Pieta Signore, di me dolente*:" "Have mercy on me, O Lord! have mercy on me; look on me in my sadness; condemn me not in justice, but pardon me in mercy." These were the words he sang. And as the

touching melody rose and swelled, filling the whole church with its melancholy strains, and then sank and died away like the sad wailing of a broken heart, there was not *one* there who could repress his tears. Even the hardened assassins, those men of blood, who, without a shudder, could murder the innocent virgin and the helpless babe,—even they were moved, and the tears glistened in their dark eyes. They sheathed their poniards, and they vowed a vow that they would never strike at the heart of him who could sing so sweetly.

St. Francis of Assisium heard but a single strain of this heavenly melody, and, though sick and dying, the unearthly sweetness of this music made him forget every pain, and charmed away his illness, and from that moment he rose from his bed in perfect health.

When the pious virgin, St. Catharine of Bologna, was about to die, she was shown a wonderful vision. She was taken in spirit to a vast and beautiful plain, where she beheld a gorgeous throne, upon which was seated a prince of unsurpassed grace and majesty. It was our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Beside him sat his ever-blessed Mother, full of beauty and sweetness. While St. Catharine was gazing with joy and love upon the blessed countenance of her divine Saviour and his holy Mother, she heard the sound of song blended with strains of sweetest harmony. The words that were sung were few, but they were repeated, again and again, with ever-varying melody: "*Et gloria ejus in te videbitur*:" "And his glory shall appear in thee." This was the burden of the heavenly song. The vision passed away, and St. Catharine came to herself again, but the sweet strains of that heavenly music were still lingering in her ear. She arose from her sick-bed,

and called for a harp. The nuns who stood round, and who had thought her already dead, were greatly surprised at her miraculous recovery, and still more so at her strange request: for they knew that she had never learned to play on the harp. St. Catharine took the harp, and played and sang so sweetly as never did mortal sing before. Then, whilst all the nuns stood there around her, entranced by this wondrous song, the holy virgin paused for a moment, and, raising her streaming eyes to heaven, listened as if to catch the sounds of that unearthly harmony. Again she burst forth in a pure, rich flood of sweetest melody, and the sweet sounds of the harp, blending with the still sweeter tones of her voice, affected them all so much, that they shed tears of mingled joy and sadness. St. Catharine never played again, but the harp was carefully preserved by the pious nuns as a most precious relic.

St. John heard this music of heaven, and he compares it to the sound of great thunder, and to the noise of many waters: "And I heard a voice from heaven. It was as the noise of many waters, and as the sound of great thunder; and the sound I heard was as the voice of many harpers playing on their harps. And they sang a new canticle before the throne, and no man could sing that canticle but those who have been purchased from the earth. These are they who have never been defiled with women, for they are virgins, and they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

There is even here on earth, dear reader, something peculiarly sweet and pure in the voice of a virgin, which we look for in vain among those who have lost the bright lustre of the lily of purity. How sweet and clear, then, must be the silvery voices of the virgins in heaven, as

they sing that canticle which none other *can* sing! And how sweet and ravishing must be the song of the Queen of virgins, the immaculate Virgin Mary! So sweet and ravishing is her voice, that a pious monk, named Thomas, who one day heard it, could never forget the sweetness of that heavenly voice. He slowly pined away, and soon died of sheer desire to hear, in the kingdom of heaven, the rapturous canticles of the blessed.

The sense of smell shall be delighted: for, from the bodies of the saints, a most sweet perfume shall go forth; and the body of Jesus Christ shall exhale an infinite sweetness, and an odor containing all delicious odors. The sense of touch shall also enjoy delight: for, the bodies of the saints, after the resurrection, shall be palpable, as was the body of Christ risen from the dead. The sense of taste will also have an actual enjoyment. "As the damned," says St. Alphonsus, "shall roll about the mouth a bitter and disagreeable fluid, so the saints shall always have in their mouth a sweet and pleasant liquid."

Here on earth we are never satisfied; we always crave for something more, something higher, something better. Whence comes this continual restlessness which haunts us through life, and even pursues us to the grave? Ah! it is the homesickness of the soul. It is the soul's craving after God. Our soul was created for God; and, until we can see and enjoy God, we can never find true rest and peace. But in heaven we shall be happy even to the fullest extent of our desires, for we shall possess the source of all happiness—God himself.

Our Lord says in the Gospel: "Well done, good and faithful servant! Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou



into the joy of thy Lord." (Matt. xxv, 23.) Our Lord does not say that his joy and happiness is to enter into his servant, but that his faithful servant is to enter into his Lord's joy. Were I to tell you that you are to receive into yourself all the water of the sea, you would say, "How can this be done? It is utterly impossible." But, were I to tell you, "Enter, plunge into the water of the sea," you would see no impossibility in this. Now, our Lord is an infinite ocean of joy and happiness. Impossible for the soul to receive this happiness all into herself, but most easy for her to enter into this ocean of happiness when our Lord tells her: "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter into the joy of thy Lord." In the very instant that the soul hears these words, she sees, by the light of glory, the infinite beauty of God face to face; she is at once filled, and, as it were, all consumed with love; she is lost and immersed in that boundless ocean of the goodness of God; she forgets herself, passing over into God and dissolving into him: the Lord communicates himself substantially to her, giving himself up to her in a manner most sweet and intimate. On this account St. John says: "Behold the tabernacle of God with men: and he will dwell with them: and they shall be his people: and God himself, with them, shall be their God." (Apoc. xxi, 3.) "He that shall overcome, shall possess these things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Apoc. xxi, 7.)

As a king is always with his people, a father with his children, a teacher with his pupils, so God will always be with the elect in heaven, recreating and feeding them, and filling them with numberless delights and unspeakable happiness. They will constantly enjoy his presence, which was hidden from them here below, but in heaven they

will see God, and speak to him face to face, and he will penetrate them with ineffable sweetness and consolation: for, "*he shall be their God,*" their father, their protector, their glorifier, *their all*.

Again: "*He will be their God;*" that is, he will be all their joy, all their honor, all their wisdom, all their riches, all their good; so that the blessed exclaim, with the Psalmist: "For, what have I in heaven? and besides thee, what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxxii, 25); and with St. Francis: "My God, my love, and my all."

Again: "*He shall be their God.*" Each one in heaven will possess God whole and entire, for God will give himself up to each one as much as he will give himself to all together; so that every one will enjoy and possess God as completely as if God belonged to him alone. "I shall be thy exceedingly great reward," said God to Abraham. "Thou my Lord, art my portion in the land of the living." If a king sits on an elevated throne, he is seen equally well by all; he is present to all at the same time, and each one enjoys his presence as much as the whole assembly does; so, in like manner, God is seen by the blessed as an immense sun, as it were, and enjoyed and possessed by each one in particular as well as by all together; and just as fine music fills the ear of every individual with as much delight as it does a large assembly, so God communicates himself, and all he has and is, to every one as he does to all. Thus all and each one will, like a fish in the water, swim in this ocean of God's happiness and delight: being made partakers of the divine nature, they enjoy true, solid, immense and incomprehensible happiness. They will retain, it is true, their own nature, but they shall assume a certain admirable and almost divine form, so as to seem to be gods rather than men.

As a sponge thrown into water becomes quite penetrated and saturated with it, so, in like manner, do the blessed become penetrated with the Divine Essence when entering into the joy of the Lord. If you place an iron in the fire, it soon looks like fire; it becomes fire itself, yet without losing its nature. In like manner, the soul, transformed into God by the light of glory, though it retains its being, is like unto God.

In virtue of this union they become pure, like God; holy, like God; powerful, wise, and happy, like God. He will transform them into himself, not by the destruction of their being, but by uniting it to his. He will communicate to them his own nature, his greatness, his strength, his knowledge, his sanctity, his riches, and felicity. In the plenitude of their joy, the blessed will exclaim: "O it is good for us to be here!"

God, then, will fill the souls of the blessed with the plenitude of his light; he will fill their will with the abundance of his peace; he will fill their memory with the extent of his eternity; he will fill their essence with the purity of his being; and he will fill all their senses and the powers of their soul with the immensity of his benefits and the infinitude of his riches. They see him as he is; they love him without defect; they behold him, the source of all beauty, and this sight ravishes their mind; they see him, the source of all goodness, and the contemplation thereof satiates their souls with enjoyment. O sweet occupation! O inestimable happiness!

But that which shall fill up the measure of the happiness of the saints is, "*that it will never end.*" Here, on earth, all our joys are fleeting; and even those pleasures that remain, soon become insipid and wearisome. We easily

become accustomed even to the highest honors, even to the sweetest pleasures. See that rich man—his wealth is unbounded. He lives in a splendid palace. His rooms are filled with costly furniture, with rich carpets and tapestry. Rare paintings and exquisite statuary, all that can please the eye, are scattered around in luxuriant profusion. His gardens are enlivened by sparkling fountains, gay flowers, and sweet-singing birds. His days and nights are spent in revelry, in the theatre, the ballroom or the opera. Ah! we sigh, we envy that man, we envy his children, and we say: "Oh! had I only his riches, how happy would I be!"

But if we go and ask him whether he is happy, and in his inmost heart he will tell us no! He soon becomes accustomed to the fine house and the costly furniture; and all the feverish joys of the ballroom and the theatre grow wearisome and bitter as soon as they are tasted. All the pleasures of this life are like the apples of Sodom, that grow near the Dead Sea. They are beautiful to the eye: but, if we taste them, we will find they are but wormwood and gall.

How different are the joys of heaven! In heaven our joy is ever new; our joy shall never end. We shall have all that our heart can desire or our soul conceive; and the more we taste of heaven's joys, the more we love them, the more we desire them.

Here, on earth, no matter how great our joys, no matter how sweet our pleasures, they are always embittered by the thought of death. There is a rich man. He feels happy in his riches; but death comes and tears him from all that he covets: others shall spend what he has hoarded with so much care. There is another. He is beautiful, perhaps, and he is vain of his beauty; but sickness comes,



and all his beauty is faded. He is beautiful; but death comes, and his fair form becomes a livid mass of hideous corruption. He must be hidden away in a dark, gloomy vault, lest his appearance fill his admirers with horror and disgust.

There is another. He is blessed with faithful friends, he is blessed with loving hearts, that sympathize with him, that rejoice in his joy, and weep in his sorrow; he has a faithful wife, he has good, loving children—he loves them, he is happy in their company; but death comes and tears away from his arms that friend, that loved one. His cup of pleasure is dashed to the ground, and all his happiness is changed into mourning.

This earth is indeed a vale of tears! But let us lift up our hearts, let us look up to heaven. O! in heaven our tears shall be dried. In heaven there shall be no death, no separation. In heaven our joys shall never end. In heaven we shall praise God forever, we shall love God forever, we shall possess God forever.

O happiness that *never* ends! O holy Zion! where all remains, and nothing passes away; where all is found, and nothing is wanting; where all is sweet, and nothing bitter; where all is calm, and nothing is agitated. O happy land! whose roses are without thorns; where peace reigns without combats, and where health is found without sickness, and life without death! O holy Thabor! O palace of the living God! O celestial Jerusalem! where the blessed sing eternally the beautiful canticles of Zion!

This happiness, even when enjoyed as many years as there are drops in the ocean, leaves in the forest, sands on the sea-shore, will be still just as new, just as great, just as delightful, just as incomprehensible, just as imperishable,

as in the first moment when entering into the soul. At each moment God has ready for them new joys, new delights, new pleasures, new beauties, new sources of joy. The happiness of the blessed will last forever; their pleasures will *never end*. O happy *never*! O happy *forever*!

Here below, the heart of man craves sympathy. Our sorrows are lessened and our joys are increased a hundred-fold, if we find a loving heart with whom we can share them. Give a man all the pleasures that his heart can desire—they will all grow cold and wearisome if he cannot find some loving heart with whom he can share them. When Adam was created, he was placed in the garden of paradise; he had there every pleasure that the heart and soul could wish, and yet he was not fully happy until God had given him a companion with whom he could share his happiness.

Now, in heaven, we shall have companions to share our joys; we shall have companions adorned with ravishing beauty, resplendent with living light,—companions, every one of whom is king or queen of a never-ending kingdom. In heaven every one of the blessed helps to increase the unutterable happiness of all the others. If you place a light in the midst of several mirrors, it will be reflected and increased by each mirror. So, also, in heaven, the happiness of each of the blessed is reflected and increased by the joys of the others. How great, then, must be the happiness of the blessed, since their own endless joy is increased as many times as there are blessed in heaven! Now, the number of the blessed is so immensely great, that no human mind can grasp it. The number of the angels is all but infinite. The Prophet Daniel was shown a vision of God seated upon a throne of majesty, and he says that

thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and that ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him. (Dan. vii, 10.) St. John, too, beheld the countless multitude of the blessed, and he says : " Behold I saw a vast multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and tongues, standing before the throne—clothed with white robes and palms in their hands. These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall not hunger or thirst any more, neither shall the sun scorch them, nor any heat. For the Lamb shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away the tears from their eyes."

O how inconceivable, then, must be the joy of the blessed, since their own happiness is increased as many times as there are angels and saints in heaven !

#### **4. Do all the saints in heaven enjoy the same degree of happiness ?**

No ; "*The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels ; and then will he render to every man according to his works.*" (Matt. xvi, 27.)

The saints in heaven do not all enjoy God in the same degree of glory. " In my Father's house," says Jesus Christ, " there are many mansions." (John xiv, 2.) From the context, it is evident that he speaks of the saints. St. Paul says the same : " For star differeth from star in glory : so also is the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. xv, 41, 42.) As there are unequal merits, so, according to St. Paul, there must be unequal rewards. Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Cor. iii, 8.) " He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap

sparingly ; and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap of blessings." (2 Cor. ix, 6.)

Although the good works of a just man, says the Council of Trent, are gifts of God, yet they are also the merits of man ; and, because the merits of men are unequal, equal glory is not given to all. Hence the beatific vision may be more or less perfect, according to the merits of each individual. (Canon xxxii, sess. 6, c. 16.) This, however, says St. Alphonsus, is no reason to believe that some of the saints in heaven should feel envy at seeing others raised to a higher degree of glory. For, in heaven, each one of the blessed is perfectly contented with the degree of beatitude which is given to him, and has no desire for greater happiness ; each one rejoices at the great happiness of others, and is at the same time content with his own. Hence all the saints are called full vessels ; that is, vessels replenished with the degree of glory which is conferred upon them.

In the kingdom of bliss, then, says St. Alphonsus, God grants to every saint that degree of love which corresponds to his merits ; and this love fills the whole capacity of his soul, so that he is satisfied with the love which God gives him. Nor does he envy others who love God in a higher degree ; on the contrary, he rejoices that there are others who love God more than he does. Those holy souls are perfectly in harmony with the divine will. Hence it is that they desire nothing but what their beloved Lord wills.

In heaven, the soul will love God according to the degree of love with which she loved him on earth ; but the love of the saints on earth will differ in two respects from their love in heaven. On this earth their love is free ; that is, they have it in their power to love God or to refuse



to love him—to love creatures instead of their Creator. In heaven, however, it is very different: in heaven, the love of God is a necessary love. The blessed are so strongly impelled to love God, that they can never abstain, even for a moment, from loving him actually; for they are under a sweet and happy necessity to love God unceasingly: it is not in their power to suspend their will, or divert it to any other object. This amiable necessity arises from the clear vision of God. In heaven they can never cease seeing God always and actually. Hence they can never cease loving God; for, knowing that God contains in himself all good, and that outside of him there is no desirable good, they can never have a desire for anything that might hinder the continual exercise of love towards their beloved Lord. On this account St. John writes: “And they (the blessed) rested not day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God omnipotent, who was, who is, and who is to come.” (Apoc. iv, 8.) This exercise of praising God arises from the perpetual love which the saints bear to him.

Again, in heaven, the love of the saints is more intense and far more perfect, because it is purified from every defect; but the degree of love in heaven is the same relatively as that on earth. Let us, then, endeavor to love God as much as possible, by making frequent acts of love, by uniting our will in all things to his will, and by laboring to inflame others with his love; but, above all, by continually beseeching him to increase our love for him.

By the beatific vision of God the saints are rendered incapable of sinning. The first reason for their impeccability is, that the sight of God, the Supreme Good, takes away from the saints the power of sinning; the second reason is, that sin proceeds from some delusion which makes

perishable goods appear to us more desirable than divine grace. But the saints cannot suffer such a delusion, because they know perfectly well that no good can be preferable to God.

This sight and this possession of God in heaven, where the soul is perfectly united with the Sovereign Good, necessarily bring with them the eternity of beatitude, and take away all danger and every possibility of change: "The just," says the Wise Man, "shall live for evermore." (Wisd. v, 16.) As soon as they enter heaven, the saints feel perfectly secure of their eternal felicity. Could this happiness ever fail, the failure would arise either from the will of the saints, or from the will of God. But it cannot arise from the will of the saints, because they are in possession of the Supreme Good, which fills them with such delight, that they never can have an aversion to their happiness; much less can the failure of the saints' happiness arise from the will of God, because he can never deprive them of their beatitude without their fault. But they are incapable of sinning, and thus they have an infallible security of their eternal beatitude.

Another consequence of the beatific vision of God which the saints enjoy, and of the love they bear him, is, that they love God immensely more than they love themselves, and on that account rejoice infinitely more at the happiness of their beloved Lord, than at their own. St Alphonsus and others are of the opinion that the beatitude of the saints consists in the joy which they experience at the infinite happiness which God possesses in himself.

In seeing God, the saints see, in a special manner, says St. Alphonsus, all the mysteries of faith in a most clear and distinct light. They see all those things which regard

their own state, that is, all things which appertain to the perfect felicity of the saints. In regard to other objects, they see only what God enables them to see according to the light of glory which he gives them. They see the glory and the thoughts of their companions in heaven. They see existing creatures and the causes of natural things, and the species, powers and properties of those things. They also see our prayers, and many other things that take place on earth, such as the conversion of sinners. "We see now," says St. Paul, "through a glass in a dark manner, but *then* (in heaven) face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known." (1 Cor. xiii, 12.)

The saints also see the pains of the damned, because this sight adds to their happiness; for the miseries of the reprobate are to the saints an incentive to thank God with greater fervor for having saved them from such torments. "In order that their beatitude," says St. Thomas, "may be more pleasing to the saints, and that they may offer to God more frequent thanks, it is given them to see, in a perfect manner, the pains of the wicked." (Sup. 9, 94, art. 1.)

But it may be said: The saints are full of charity—how, then, can they help feeling compassion and sorrow for so many miserable souls who are condemned to suffer forever such severe torments? St. Gregory answers that, although the saints are naturally full of charity, yet they are so perfectly united to the divine will in heaven, they cannot pity the wicked who actually and obstinately hate their beloved Lord. It is for this reason, says St. Thomas, that they do not pity the damned, but rejoice at their punishment and at seeing the order of the divine justice executed. Of things possible and future, the saints know as much as God is pleased to reveal to them.

Lastly, theologians also teach that some of the saints will obtain certain singular prerogatives on account of some singular victory which they have obtained in this life. The essential reward which each saint obtains in heaven is called *a golden crown* ; but the accidental reward given to some of the elect on account of some great victory gained on earth is called *aureola*, or little crown of gold, which is a certain joy merited by certain works, the performance of which is equal to the gaining of a great victory. Among the Romans, though the victory was won by all, the crown was given, not to all the soldiers, but only to those who had distinguished themselves by their valor on the field of battle. Thus, although the essential glory of heaven is given to all, the aureola will be conferred on those who have gained a great victory over the devil, the world, or the flesh.

### 5. Are many souls saved ?

*Christ says : " Narrow is the gate, and straight is the way, which leadeth to life, and few there are that find it. Enter ye in at the narrow gate." (Matt. vii, 13, 14.)*

There are two gates through which souls enter the eternal world. Of these, one is wide, the other narrow. The wide gate opens into a miserable and bitter eternity ; the narrow gate opens into the eternity of joy and happiness. There are two roads that lead to them ; one is on the right, the other on the left. The one on the right conducts men safely to heaven ; the one on the left leads them straight to hell. The road on the right is frequented by only a few poor and toiling pilgrims. The road on the left is crowded with a multitude who are filled with merriment and delights. The road on the right is rugged and difficult ; that on the left is smooth and pleasant. There are but few who choose



the steep and narrow way on the right. To enter heaven at the narrow gate or by the straight way is to mortify our senses, suppress our passions, and do continual violence to nature; it is to cut off all unlawful pleasures, and deprive ourselves of many that are lawful; it is to cut off all superfluities, and retain only those things that are necessary; it is to obey with joy the commandments of God, and even those counsels which are difficult to follow.

The greater part of men, however, do not choose to walk on this road of penance. They take the road on the left, which is full of voluptuousness and licentiousness. Those who walk thereon deny themselves no gratification; they shrink from the slightest inconvenience or difficulty; their lives are devoted to good cheer and to the amusements of the world. They entertain a horror of penance, and abandon themselves to their passions. No wonder, then, that our dear Saviour has said: "Many (that is, all) are called" to eternal life, but "few are chosen;" "Few there are that find the straight way that leadeth to life."

#### **6. And shall not the wicked live forever?**

*They shall live and be punished forever in the flames of hell.*

This question has already been sufficiently explained in Article I, q. 11, on the angels; we will only refute here some of the objections brought against the eternity of hell.

Origen was the first who denied the eternity of the pains of hell. His error was adopted by the Socinians and by many Protestants. This heresy was condemned, as contrary to the Catholic faith, by the second General Council of Constantinople, and by the fathers of the Church.

1. The eternity of the pains of hell cannot be said to be

unjust, for "the majesty of God," says St. Thomas, "is infinite; therefore, whoever sins mortally is deserving of infinite punishment. On this account a perpetual chastisement is justly inflicted for mortal sin." (Sup. 3 p., qu. 99, art. 1.)

2. It cannot be said that it is unjust to punish with eternal torments a sin which lasts but a moment. St. Augustine answers (*de Civ.* 1, 21, c. 11) that punishment should not be estimated by the duration, but by the grievousness of sin. Even earthly tribunals inflict the penalty of perpetual exile or death for crimes which require but a brief space for their commission. "The guilt," says St. Thomas, "remains forever, for it cannot be remitted without grace; and after death, man can no longer acquire grace. The punishment therefore must last as long as the guilt lasts." "The damned," says St. Alphonsus, "are obstinate in evil; they love their sin, at the very time that they suffer the punishment due to it. Why, then, should God deliver them from punishment, when they continue to love their iniquities? And how can he remit the sins of the damned when they are so obstinate in hatred against him, that, were he to offer his pardon and friendship, they would reject the offer?"

3. It cannot be said that the everlasting punishment is not compatible with the mercy and clemency of God. St. Thomas answers that God has abundantly displayed his mercy towards men. What greater mercy could God show to men than, when he saw them in a state of perdition on account of the sin of Adam and of their own sins, to descend from heaven to earth, to become man, and, after a life of poverty, lowliness and tribulations, to die of pain on a shameful gibbet? What greater love could he manifest to them than to nourish their souls with his flesh and blood

in the blessed sacrament, and thus preserve and increase their fervor till death, in order that, dying united with him, they might enter heaven to enjoy eternal bliss. On the day of judgment God will make known to the whole world the greatness of the mercies, lights, and help, which he has dispensed to each man during his life. And with what patience has he not expected, with what love has he not so often called to repentance, many who deserved not his graces but his vengeance! Who, then, can say that God has not shown mercy to those who have despised all his favors, and who, for the indulgence of their passions and earthly pleasures, have voluntarily lived and died at enmity with God, and have voluntarily abandoned themselves to eternal ruin? Who, then, can say that God has not shown mercy to such ungrateful wretches, who, because they remained in sin, will be punished in hell as long as their guilt will last?

4. Again, heretics say that punishment is inflicted, either to correct the guilty, or at least to strike terror into others. But in hell the damned are incapable of amendment, and their companions can derive no profit from their pains. Why, then, should they be kept forever in torments? St. Thomas answers (p. 3, qu. 87, art. 1) that such considerations appertain to the rulers of human institutions; but God, who is the Ruler of the universe, should attend to that which contributes to the general good, and therefore he should preserve justice, which requires that the good should receive the reward due to their virtues, and that on the wicked should be inflicted a punishment proportioned to their crimes. Thus, without incurring the guilt of partiality, justice dispenses rewards, and, without deserving the imputation of cruelty, it executes vengeance.

5. It is said that the saints in heaven are so powerful with God, and so full of charity, that they will not cease praying for the damned, and thus they will deliver many from hell. St. Thomas answers (p. 3, sup., qu. 99, art. 3, ad. 2) that the saints pray for sinners who live on this earth, where they are in a state in which they can be converted ; but the damned who have died in sin are no longer in a state of returning to God, and therefore neither the Church militant nor the Church triumphant offers prayers for them.

6. It is objected again that Jesus Christ has said : "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. v, 7.) They, then, who have practised charity to others in this life, shall in the end, after some time, obtain mercy from the Lord, and shall be delivered from hell. St. Thomas answers (loc. cit., art. 5, ad. 1), "that mercy shall be shown to those who show mercy according to order ; but not to those who, in extending mercy to others, neglect themselves," and voluntarily bring themselves to perdition. Others again say : "The Lord says the fire is eternal, but he does not say that the punishment is eternal." But, not to waste words, let us see whether the Scripture teaches that this punishment is everlasting. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, we find it said of the damned : "These shall go into everlasting punishment" (xxv, 46). And St. Paul says : "Who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction." (2 Thess. i, 9.) Hence, the fire shall not only be eternal, but shall eternally torture the damned. The reason why in hell there is no cessation of pain, no relief, is, because sin, which is the cause of their pain, remains the same forever in the damned.



## 7. What are the punishments of the damned?

1, *The loss of God and of heaven forever* ; 2, *the intolerable torments of the senses* ; 3, *the eternal agony of despair*.

1. There is a hell of the body and a hell of the soul. "Fear him," says Jesus Christ, "that can destroy both soul and body into hell." (Matt. x, 28.) The most excruciating torment, the most intolerable for the human soul, is to be deprived of seeing God, with the thought of being deprived of him forever. This is what is called the pain of loss. And to understand in some measure what this pain of loss is, we must remember that we have been created to be forever happy. This love, this yearning for happiness, which every one feels in his heart, will never be destroyed, not even in hell. Impelled by this desire, and blinded by passion, men seek happiness in riches, in sensual pleasures, in drunkenness. They try to find happiness in politics, in acquiring an honorable position in society, in the pursuit of earthly knowledge. These vain images of happiness deceive many until the soul is severed from the body. At the hour of death all these false, fleeting pleasures disappear, and God, the true source of all happiness, stands unveiled before the soul in all his ravishing beauty. He shows himself to her in his power, in which he created the whole world out of nothing ; he lets her see his wisdom in governing the world ; he lets her see his love, in which he became man, died for us, and even gave himself as food and drink in the blessed sacrament. He lets her see his liberality, with which he rewards the just in heaven. Yes, God shows himself to the soul such as he is ; he lets her have as great a knowledge of all his infinite perfections as she is capable of attaining, in order to make her understand most clearly the infinite

eternal happiness which he has prepared for those who served him faithfully on earth. This knowledge of the greatness, amiability, and goodness of God, will remain imprinted upon the soul for all eternity. In the light of this knowledge, which is communicated to the soul in a moment, she will also see the justice of the punishments which God inflicts forever in hell upon those who did not keep his commandments.

Then it is that the soul rushes towards God with all the impetuosity of an intelligent, immortal spirit. If you have ever stood upon the banks of the Niagara and gazed on the rapids, you must have noticed how the waters hurry on past rocks and trees, roaring and foaming and bounding, till at last they leap wildly into the yawning abyss. Such a sight is, at least, a faint picture of the fierce impetuosity with which the soul rushes towards God, the source of all happiness, after she has left the body. But who can describe the wild agony of the soul when she finds herself repelled from God, tied down by the chains of hell, oppressed by the heavy weight of mortal sin? The famished soul yearns to possess God, the centre of her happiness, but all her efforts are fruitless; she is cast off from God; she is chained forever. Were all the riches of this world, were all the honors, all the pleasures, of this life placed before the soul, she would turn away from them at that moment; she would curse them all. The lost soul yearns for God alone, for she can be happy only in God.

In our present life we do not feel any great sorrow for not seeing God, because we are not yet in the right state to experience such pain. A king at the age of three or four years would feel no pain at losing his kingdom; he would even play with the usurper who wore his crown and

wielded his sceptre; but at the age of twenty or thirty, when his judgment is formed, he would feel such a calamity very keenly. In this life we are but as children, not capable of being greatly afflicted for not seeing our Lord.

But no sooner has the reprobate soul left the body than she sees clearly, and understands perfectly, what she has lost. She sees the immense happiness she would have had in heaven with God and his angels and saints. And now she sees that all this happiness is lost—lost by her own fault—lost hopelessly and forever. How painful is the cry of a child that has lost its mother! How heart-rending are the wailings of those whose sister is leaving them to go to a strange country, perhaps never to see them again! Imagine, then, what the wailing will be when the soul hears these words from God: “Depart from me, accursed one, forever.”

In this life sinners refuse to think of God, in order to indulge their passions; but in hell they shall, by a just punishment, be constrained against their will to think continually of him. They would wish that they could forget him altogether; but their intellect will always be fixed on the thought of God, and on what they have lost in losing him.

2. A severe fright is one of the most painful things in the world. A single indignant look that Philip II, King of Spain, cast upon two of his courtiers who behaved irreverently in church, was enough to drive one of them out of his senses, and to cause the death of the other. Some years ago, a woman travelling through England came to an inn, where she stayed over-night. During the evening the guests amused themselves by telling ghost-stories, and the lady went to her room, her mind filled with what she had heard.

About midnight she was aroused by a strange noise. She sat up in bed and listened, but could hear nothing. She lay down again to sleep, and was again aroused. Straining her ears, she heard distinctly sounds of the clanking of chains, footsteps coming upstairs and moaning. The footsteps came nearer and nearer to the door. All on a sudden the door opened, and she saw in the pale moonlight a tall, spectral figure with long, matted hair, a grisly beard, and with clanking chains on his hands and feet. She tried to attribute it to her imagination; but no, it was a terrible reality. She endeavored to shriek, but the blood froze in her veins, the tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. The ghastly apparition drew near her bed. She could not move; she was, as it were, spell-bound. The strange visitor sighed and moaned; then cast himself at the foot of the large bed in which she was lying. Who can describe her agony, the long hours till morning? She dared not, she could not move. When morning had come, the servant came to call her, and found her pale as death; even her hair had turned grey through terror in that single night. The strange visitor was a poor maniac, who had been kept in a distant room, and had broken his chain and wandered to the lady's room.

The damned soul will be lying helpless in the lonesome darkness of hell. The devils come in the most frightful shapes on purpose to frighten her. A holy religious saw at his death two such monstrous and ugly devils. He cried out, saying that, rather than see them again, he would walk till the day of judgment on fire of sulphur and molten metal. St. Bridget (B. vi, *Revel.* lii) tells us that she saw a woman who had been condemned to hell coming out of a lake of fire, without any heart in her chest, without



lips on her countenance, with eyes dissolved on her cheeks, with serpents on her bosom, who cried out to her daughter, who was still alive : " My daughter, no longer a child but a venomous serpent ! Wretch that I am for having brought you forth, but much more so for having taught you to commit sin ! As often as you return to the commission of sin, from the bad example I gave you, my pains are fearfully renewed."

The hearing is continually tormented. You have heard, perhaps, a horrible scream in the dead of night. You may have heard the last shriek of a drowning man before he went down into his watery grave. You may have been shocked, in passing a mad-house, to hear the wild shout of a madman. But what are these to be compared to the horrible uproar of millions and millions of tormented creatures, mad with the fury of hell ? There the damned are heard roaring like lions, hissing like serpents, howling like dogs. There are heard the gnashing of teeth and the fearful blasphemies of the devils, and, above all, the roaring of the thunders of God's anger, which shakes hell to its foundations.

There is in hell a sound like the noise of many waters. It is as if all the rivers and oceans of the world were pouring themselves with a great splash down on the floor of the dismal abode. Is it really the sound of waters ? It is. Are the rivers and oceans of the earth pouring themselves into hell ? No ; it is the sound of oceans of tears running down from the eyes of the damned. And those tears run eternally. They cry because the sulphurous smoke torments their eyes ; they cry because they are in darkness ; they cry because they have lost the beautiful heaven, and are shut out from the face of God ; they cry

because there is no hope of redemption for them. It is thus that the hearing of the damned is tortured, because they listened with sinful pleasure to so many slanderous discourses, to so many immodest conversations, to so many words of double meaning.

The scent, too, has its peculiar torment. There are some diseases so bad, such as cancers and ulcers, that people cannot bear to breathe the air in the house where they are. There is something worse. It is the smell of death, coming from a dead body lying in the grave. It is related, in the life of St. Walburga, that a murderer, having killed a pilgrim, took him in his arms to bury him in a hidden place. The murdered body clasped him so strongly that the wretched assassin could not by any means detach himself from it, even with the sword; so that the mangled body, by its stench, caused the death of the murderer.

But what is the smell of death in hell? St. Bonaventure says that, if one single body was taken out of hell and laid on the earth, in that same moment every living creature on the earth would sicken and die. Such is the smell of death from one body in hell: what, then, will be the smell of death from countless millions of bodies laid in hell like sheep? This torment is inflicted upon the damned because, while on earth, they liked to stay in the pestiferous air of bad companions, of public-houses, of houses of ill-fame, of those low haunts of sin and shame which lead to hell.

The taste, in punishment of gluttony and intemperance, is tormented by ravenous hunger. The Prophet Isaias says (ix, 20) that in hell hunger will be so horrible, that every one shall eat the flesh of his own arm. Tormented by insupportable thirst, Dives, from hell, asked nothing of Abraham but a drop of water, while he was tormented

with gall, wormwood, and disgusting liquids. The Roman tyrants forced several martyrs to drink boiling resin and molten metals. But torture such as this gives no idea of the torments prepared by the devil and his angels for those who fall into his hands.

The feeling of the damned is tormented in various ways: "He will give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn and may feel forever." (Jud. xvi, 21.) St. Basil assures us that in hell there will be worms without number eating the flesh, and their bites will be unbearable. St. Teresa tells us that the Lord one day showed to her the frightful place of hell. She says that she found the entrance filled with venomous insects. The bite or the pricking of one insect on the earth sometimes keeps a person awake, and torments him for hours. What will be his suffering in hell, when millions of them make their dwelling-place in the mouth, the ears, the eyes, and creep all over the body, and sting it with their deadly stings through all eternity? There will be no escape from them where it is not allowed to stir hand or foot.

Above all, the feelings of the damned will be tormented by fire,—by a fire so scorching, so hot and intense, that a mountain of bronze thrown into it would melt in an instant; a fire which burns everything, but burns nothing away, which causes all kinds of torments, and the pains of diseases; a fire made by God for the purpose of being a fit instrument of his vengeance; a fire enkindled in the wrath of the Almighty (Deut. xxxii, 22) to burn the souls as well as the bodies; a fire that has no need of fuel to sustain it, being kept alive by the power of God; a fire that devours the reprobate in such a manner as to preserve them in order to devour them constantly for ever

and ever; a fire that preserves in the damned as much sensitiveness to sufferings as it has activity to cause them to suffer; a fire which is, as it were, intelligent, making a distinction between sinners, between the senses and the mental faculties which have served as instruments to offend the Almighty, and proportioning the pain to the degree of perversity which it punishes; a fire so penetrative as to identify itself, as it were, with its victims; a fire, of which our fire on earth is only a picture of fire; a fire which is sad and sombre, serving only to make visible such objects as can torment the sight. So there is in hell only one night,—one everlasting night of darkness. No stray sunbeam, no wandering ray of starlight, ever strays into that deep darkness.

A priest who spent some years in Italy told the following story. When at Naples, he was shown a table. In that table was seen the impress of the hand of a damned soul, that appeared to a young man who had been the cause of her eternal ruin. She appeared to him all on fire, and said: "You are the cause of my damnation." In saying this, she touched the table but slightly with her hand, and as her hand, like the rest of her body, was all fire, it burnt the table, and left in it its impress forever.

Not long ago a young man came in all haste to a priest, begging him to hear his confession without delay. "Why are you in so great a hurry to make your confession?" said the priest. "Alas, your reverence! I have been unfortunate enough to commit a great crime with a young lady. She died immediately after the sinful action, and appeared to me in a most frightful state. She was all on fire,—all on fire from head to foot. She threatened to take away my life, and draw me into hell, and torment me



there for having been the cause of her eternal damnation. O father ! hear my confession—please hear it at once, that I may not go to hell !”

3. How to describe the eternity of the pains of the damned ! It would require the language of an angel. It would require the language of those fallen angels who have been suffering the torments of hell from the beginning of the world. Could one of those lost spirits stand before us at this moment, and describe the meaning and significance of “the loss of a soul ;” could he but speak of the death of the soul,—that death that never dies ! Let him tell of the anguish of that remorse that comes too late, and never goes away. Let him describe the fierce fire, that never quenches ; the gnawing worm, that never dies. Let him dilate on heaven and all its beauty,—the heaven not possessed or enjoyed. Let him describe the eternal regret of a soul that had been created for heaven, that had once even half-tasted of its happiness, then lost it all, and lost it through her own fault. Let him tell of the loss of God,—of God, the supreme, the unutterable beauty, the boundless ocean of joy and happiness. Let him speak of God’s infinite love, of his excessive desire to make his creatures happy, and yet all lost, irreparably lost ! Oh ! could such a spirit speak to us now, we should never forget it. Could he stand before us, we should need no feeble human words. For, whatever man can say or imagine of hell, must fall infinitely short of the dread reality. No eye has seen it, nor ear has heard it, nor has it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has in store for those who hate him.

Forever to suffer, with never a ray of hope ; forever to burn, and never to be refreshed ; forever to hunger and

thirst, and never to be appeased; forever to rave with impotent fury, and never to be pitied; forever to despair, and never to be comforted,—O fearful eternity!

To suffer the torments of fire is an excruciating pain, but yet it may be endured. The martyrs have exulted in the midst of the flames. To suffer the pangs of shame and remorse is an awful pain, which few can bear. To be deprived for a time of the enjoyments of heaven, of the possession of God, is a pain which far exceeds all corporal suffering. But were all these pains and torments of hell to be united and increased a thousand-fold, and were they to last for millions and millions of years, provided only that they once came to an end, then would hell cease to be a hell. Were God to send an angel from heaven to announce to the damned that, after as many millions of years as there are grains of sand on the shores of the sea, their torments would come to an end, how great would be their happiness! Their blasphemies, their howlings of despair, would cease; they would burst forth into canticles of praise and gladness; hell would be changed, as it were, into heaven. But this happiness shall never be theirs.

How many are there now living in hell who, could they speak, would testify to the truth of this! What a story could Cain, the first murderer, tell! “Ah!” he cries, “I have been suffering here for thousands and thousands of years, but my sufferings are not for one moment lessened. Day after day, month after month, year after year, the world grew older and more wicked, till at last the great deluge came, and cleansed the earth with its avenging flood. The deluge came and went, but not for me. The whole earth was covered with water, but not a drop came to me to quench my thirst,—not a drop fell upon my burning tongue.

“The prophets appeared upon the earth, and foretold the rise and growth of vast kingdoms and empires. Ages after ages rolled by, and at last their prophecies were fulfilled. The day dawned when these kingdoms and empires arose. They grew powerful, and, as ages passed away, declined or were shattered by the storm of revolution. They crumbled away one by one, and sank back into forgetfulness. But with all these countless, changeful years there came no change for me. I have been ever burning, as I am still burning, in these flames, and I must burn here for all eternity.

“The prophets foretold that the Redeemer would one day come and save the world, and, after long years and ages of weary expectation, the Redeemer came at last. He was born ; he lived and died to redeem the world ; he saved the world, and returned to heaven ; but for me there was and is no redemption.”

For how many years has the unhappy Judas been burning in those fierce flames, and how many tears of bitter remorse has he shed ! When shall his torments end ? When shall God wipe away his tears ? Perhaps when he shall have shed as many tears as there are grains of sand on the sea-shore, leaves in the forest, drops in the ocean, and stars in the firmament. Perhaps then an end may come to his sufferings. His torments shall be then beginning. Add a million of years to eternity, and it shall not be increased ; take away a million of years, it shall not be diminished. Even then their eternity is not a moment lessened, for theirs is an end that never ends, a death that never dies.

What tongue shall describe the unhappy fate of the damned soul ? The weight of an endless eternity presses upon her like a huge mountain. She looks up to heaven :

it is forever closed against her. In her agony she cries aloud: "O blessed gate! O gate of paradise! shalt thou never open for me? O paradise of delights! shall I never possess thee? O blessed light! shalt thou never shine for me?" The thunders of God's parting malediction rings in her ears: "Never, never!" She looks at the gates of her prison and cries: "O gate! shalt thou never open for me?" She hears a voice that distinctly says to her: "Never, never!" for the gate of hell is sealed with the dread seal of the Almighty. She looks at the torments that surround her, and cries: "O torments! O fire! will you never give me a moment's relief?" "Never, never!"

She looks into her guilty conscience. All the sins of her past life are preying like ravenous vultures upon her bleeding heart, and she shrieks, in despair: "Oh! shall I never have one hour, one solitary hour, wherein to blot out these damning sins with the sweet tears of repentance? Oh! for one single hour to cast myself at the feet of the priest of God, to hear from his lips the sweet words: 'Go in peace: thy sins are forgiven.' O happy years of my childhood! will you never more return? O blessed hours of innocence and peace! shall I never see you any more?" Never, never! The angel of God has sworn by Him that liveth for ever and ever, "that time shall be no more."

Fain would the damned annihilate themselves, and destroy forever their unhappy existence; but in vain. They can only increase, they can never end, their torments. In their agony they cry aloud: "O God of justice, God of vengeance! come, destroy me; annihilate this being thou hast given me." But God is deaf to their cries. He offered them eternal life, and they refused it. Now they shall seek death, and shall not find it. He offered them



redemption, and they spurned his offer. Now they shall yearn to be redeemed, and redemption shall never be theirs.

“O ye demons!” they cry, “come and kill us, come and destroy us.” The demons rush upon them and torment them anew, but destroy them, they cannot. They led a life of ease and pleasure while on earth; it is but just that they shall now live a life of endless torment in hell. They refused to glorify God’s mercy while on earth; now they shall glorify God’s infinite sanctity and justice forever. The sun shall rise and set, and the moon grow full and wane again; the grass shall grow green and wither, and the birds sing, and their song shall be hushed in death; the flowers shall bloom and fade; men shall be born, and shall make merry and die away, and nations shall rise and flourish, and sink back into forgetfulness; the whole earth shall be shaken by whirlwind and earthquake; yea, the heavens and the earth shall flee away before the face of God, and be folded up as a scroll, and the blessed shall enter the joys of heaven, and their song of gladness shall resound for ever and ever; while the unhappy damned shall be burning in that fire that changes not and is not lessened—without hope, without end, as long as God is God.

**8. Will all the damned suffer the same degree of punishment?**

*No; every one will be punished in proportion to the number of sins committed.*

All the damned, it is true, are deprived of the sight of God; yet the pain arising from this privation will afflict each one of the damned according to the measure of his sins, and according to the knowledge which he has in hell of the loss of God. We cannot suppose that a person who

has lost God for one mortal sin, is as severely afflicted at the loss as another who has lost God for a hundred sins; or that this pain of loss is felt as severely by him who lived in sin for a day, as by him who lived in sin for a year. As he who loved God most on earth shall enjoy him most perfectly in heaven by the knowledge of the immense good which he possesses, so, in like manner, the damned who treated God with the greatest contempt will be most severely afflicted, because they will have the most perfect knowledge of the great good which they have lost.

How just are the judgments of God! During life, God invited that sinner, God wished to dwell in his heart. "My delight," says he, "is to be with the children of men." But that man despised God; he drove God away from him by his sins. How often did Jesus stand at the door of the sinner's heart and crave admittance! Jesus watched and waited patiently there; but that man would not hearken to his voice, he hardened his heart. How often did God call and invite him to give up sin and return, like the prodigal son, to the bosom of his father! God promised to receive him with open arms, and to give him the kiss of peace. God wished to fold him under his wings, as the hen folds her little ones; but he would not come. And now, all is changed. God's terrible threat is fulfilled upon that sinner: "You shall seek me, but you shall not find me." You renounced me, you left me, you turned your back upon me and clung to creatures, preferring them to me, your God and Maker, and placing all your happiness in them. It is just, then, that I, your God and Redeemer, should also despise you and banish you from my presence, and from the happy company of all my faithful servants; it is just that I should curse you with a father's curse, with a

mother's, a Creator's, a Redeemer's curse : "Depart from me, accursed one, into everlasting fire." God will punish sinners in proportion to the mercy which he showed them, but which they abused. The more a sinner abused the mercy of God, the greater will be his pains in hell. Job calls this prison a place of darkness, where no order, but everlasting horrors have their settled abode. That is to say, there is no order as regards the actions of the damned, but there is perfect order as regards the justice of God : for, "God punishes disorders with order, follies with wisdom, sin with sanctity, injustice with equity," says St. Gregory. The sun, in striking several persons with the same rays, makes different impressions on them, because they feel its heat according to the disposition in which it finds them. So the same fire torments the damned, but not with equal violence : they are more or less punished according to the greater or less gravity of their crime.

Moreover, order shines in their sufferings, because each bad thought, word, and action, shall have its own peculiar punishment. The part that sinned most shall be the most grievously punished. Finally, order appears in the choice of chastisement : the proud man shall suffer contempt and confusion, the impure shall suffer physical pain, the intemperate, hunger and thirst.

There is also an order followed by the torturers whom divine justice uses to punish the damned. The more souls a man has ruined and sent to hell, the more tormentors he will find there.

Not many years ago, a young man came, in the middle of the night, to a Redemptorist convent in Europe. He rang the bell and knocked loudly at the door. One of the fathers who happened to be up, went to open the door. The young

man fell at his feet, crying, in accents of despair, "O father! help me, help me. I am lost! I am damned!" The father thought that the young man had perhaps been drinking freely, and was now suffering from the delirium tremens. He therefore advised him to go home; but the young man besought him, in still more piteous accents, to help him. "This very night," said he, "whilst sleeping alone in my room, I was suddenly aroused: I saw before me the figure of one with whom I had sinned. She had the face of a demon, and she was enveloped in flames. She cried, in a voice that penetrated to the very marrow of my bones: 'Accursed wretch! it is you who have damned me; I shall never let you rest till you also burn in hell.' She then sprang upon me and gored my breast with her fiery horns." At these words the young man bared his breast. It was all mangled and bleeding, so that the priest shuddered at the sight. They both went straightway to the house of the young woman. They aroused the inmates of it, and entered the room of the unfortunate creature, and found her dead.

This frightful incident shows us the truth of what the Wise Man says, namely: that each one is tormented by things which he used to commit sin; the object of his unlawful joy will become the instrument of his just punishment. The more creatures he abused for his sinful pleasures, the more souls he will have in hell to torment him.

A wicked wretch once said: "If I am damned, I shall not be alone; I shall have many companions with me." Fool! do you not know that every companion will be a new torment and tormentor? What a torture for you were you to remain chained together for life with your most bitter enemy! What, then, will it be for you to remain in



company with innumerable enemies of God and man for all eternity ? You have no courage to live in a cloister of strict observance, where you would have many companions, good and holy. How will you remain in hell with numberless damned souls, that are the shame of nature, the opprobrium of the universe, monsters of ugliness ? What an affliction and torment never to have any one to look kindly on us, to speak a gentle word to us ! What unspeakable desolation to be in a company whence all honor, all respect, all civility, all virtue, are banished ; where there reigns but fury, hatred, and irreconcilable enmity ; where compassion has no place ; where whoever complains of his misfortunes shall be answered with bitter railleries ; where, during all eternity, there shall not be found a single creature to console the damned soul ; but where, on the contrary, all will rejoice at her pains and everlasting perdition ; where all the bonds of friendship are broken ; where all beautiful relationship is lost ; where they shall mortally hate one another, and so intensely, that a word of friendship shall never proceed from them ; where the father shall hate his son, and the son his father, and the friend his friend ! And they shall hate one another with so much the more intensity as they have been instrumental in one another's ruin.

### 9. Will many souls be lost ?

*Yes ; for, " wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat." (Matt. vii, 13.)*

A famous missionary in Italy was one day preaching to an immense multitude. He stood in the open air, under the clear blue sky, and the wide field around him was thronged with the thousands who had come to hear him. It was

summer, and the lofty trees around, with their rich foliage, made an agreeable shade to the audience. A dead silence fell upon all, and all eyes were riveted upon the speaker. There he stood, his arms extended, his eyes raised to heaven: he was rapt in ecstasy. A moment more and the missionary broke the solemn stillness, and cried aloud, in a voice so strong and awful that it caused the ears of his hearers to tingle, and penetrated the very marrow of their bones: "Oh! my brethren, how many, many souls are damned! Just now God opened my eyes, and I saw the souls of men falling into hell as the dead leaves fall in the harvest-time." And, lo! as he spoke, a mighty wind there arose, and the green leaves dropped from the trees though it was yet summer, and the earth was strewn with the fallen leaves, and all who heard him were filled with unspeakable terror.

Were God to open our eyes this moment, we would also see how the souls of men even now are falling into hell thick as the snowflakes fall in winter. And why? It is because human nature is corrupt, and has an insatiable craving for evil and forbidden things; it is because the children of men refuse to do violence to their natural evil inclinations and to control their passions; they are governed by sensual pleasures, which corrupt the heart; they live according to the maxims of the world, which are opposed to the precepts of Jesus Christ; they live in sin, and scoff at penance and humility. So many are lost, because they cease sinning only when it is no longer in their power to sin. They seldom or never think of God, they refuse to hear his word, and to keep his commandments. They die as they have lived, and, as the greater part of men live in sin, it is natural that they should die in sin; for, the devil,

the enemy of souls, rarely suffers the prey which he has secured in life, to escape him at the hour of death. It is difficult, indeed, to destroy in old age a habit contracted in early youth. The wicked carry with them to the grave the vices of their early years ; these penetrate the marrow of their bones, and sleep with them under the dust. No wonder, therefore, if so many are damned.

### 10. Are all lost through their own fault ?

*Yes ; for, "before man is life and death : that which he shall choose shall be given him." (Ecclus. xv, 18.)*

It is the will of God that all men should be saved. He bestows free will and understanding on all who come into the world. He refuses his grace to no one. He delivered his only Son to a painful and ignominious death for the salvation of sinners : "I desire not the death of the sinner," says the Lord through his prophet, "but that he return to me and live." He never abandons a soul which does not first abandon him. He, therefore, who is lost, is lost through his own fault. Hence it is that the memory, the intellect, and especially the will, of the damned, are so frightfully tormented. The lost sinner will remember with how little trouble he might have avoided hell. He will repeat to himself : "So little was required for my salvation : it was only to make a good confession. What little labor would this have been ! Because of a little shame I did not make it. How foolish I was ! How often did I hear the truth in sermons ! How often did my conscience and my friends admonish me to make the confession ! But all in vain. How many have committed more and greater sins than I. But they were wise enough to confess their sins, and do penance in time ; they are in paradise. What a fool I

have been ! I am lost forever through my own fault. But now this repentance is unavailing—these reflections come too late.”

With this torment of the memory will be combined that of the intellect, which will make the most fatal reflections. “During life,” the sinner will say to himself, “I loved ease and luxury, fine garments and a costly dwelling. To gain these, I scrupled not to defraud my neighbor. I stole from my employers, I took false oaths, I joined secret societies, I even sold my virtue. I stayed away from Mass, neglected the sacraments, denied my faith, and turned my back upon Jesus Christ. I was willing to commit every crime, provided I could become rich, provided I could dress in costly garments, and live in a rich and splendid dwelling. How frightful is my torment now that I find myself torn from that luxurious dwelling for which I sacrificed my faith, my soul, my hope of heaven, to find myself plunged into the horrid darkness and the devouring flames of hell. During life, I loved liberty and license. The Church of God commanded me to hear Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation ; she commanded me to abstain from meat on Fridays and fast-days, to go to confession and communion, at least, once a year ; she forbade me to marry before a civil magistrate or preacher ; she forbade me to quit my lawful wife and marry another. But I refused to be bound by these laws ; I wished to be free, and to do as I pleased. God commanded me to keep away from the meetings of heretical sects ; to keep away from balls, theatres, and other haunts of sin ; to avoid immodest and dangerous company, to give up immodest and sinful practices. But I wished to be free, to think and to act as I pleased. How terrible is my agony, my despair, now,



when I find myself bound hand and foot, and chained like a galley-slave to the dreary dungeon of hell!

“During my lifetime, I loved to listen to backbiting and calumny, to immodest discourses, to words of double meaning. How great now is my punishment in hell, where I hear nothing but curses, blasphemies, wailing, and shrieks of despair! When on earth, I loved the darkness. I chose the darkest night, I chose the most secret nook, in order to gratify my brutal lust. Now that I find myself in hell, I shall have darkness, eternal darkness. I loved to gaze upon immodest objects; I loved to read immodest books. Not only in the ballroom and the theatre, not only in the house of ill-fame, but even in the church, in the house of God, I fed my lustful eyes, by gazing immodestly on those around me. Now that I am in hell, my eyes shall look upon no other objects: they shall see most hideous demons and the ghastly souls of the damned. While on earth, I loved to drink and drink until I degraded myself below the level of the brute. I did not wish to give up liquor, though my friends, my wife, my children, the priest of God, conjured me to do so. Now that I am in hell, I shall drink my fill of torturing fire, of the poison of serpents, of the gall of dragons. When on earth, I was not willing to give up that unlawful company which God and the Church forbade me to keep. I was not willing to give up the secret society I had joined. I rather gave up my religion, the holy sacraments, and my hope for heaven, than renounce that society. I was not willing to give up visiting the barroom, associating with drunkards and gamblers, though my friends, my children, my wife, and the priest of God, conjured me to do so. I was not willing to give up that house which was so often the occasion of sin

for me. Now that I find myself in the gloomy vaults of hell, I have for company the most degraded beings that ever existed. I have the company of a countless multitude of villains, murderers, blasphemers and madmen—all chained together, all tortured by unquenchable fire, by the never-dying worm, howling and shrieking in mad despair. Such are and will be my companions forever, for having chosen to live and die in mortal sin. Here I have no longer a protector, a friend, a loving father, a kind mother. No; all the ties of friendship, all the ties of nature, the strong ties of love, are forever broken, forever turned into devilish hate. Every evil spirit, every damned soul, insults me, curses me, tortures me, in his fury, as much as he pleases. I must submit to all; I must submit to it, in just punishment for having refused to submit to the will of God on earth."

### 11. What, then, should we often remember?

*We should often remember the four last things of man, that is: death, judgment, hell, and heaven.*

The Holy Ghost gives us, in Holy Scripture, an excellent means to be always preserved from committing sin. This means is, "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Ecclus. vii, 40.) In these words the Holy Ghost tells us that we should always remember death, judgment, hell, and heaven, which are the last things of every man.

The first of the last things of man is death. The frequent remembrance of death is a very powerful means to make us give up sin and lead a holy life. Hence a certain man who often reflected on death, wrote these words on a skull, "*Cogitanti vilescent omnia;*" that is, it is

impossible for him who thinks upon death to love the world. This thought—namely, that all things end with death—made St. Francis Borgia give himself up entirely to God. This saint was obliged to accompany the body of the deceased Empress Isabella to Granada. When the coffin was opened, all those present fled, because of the dreadful sight and smell; but St. Francis, led by divine light, remained to contemplate, in that body, the vanity of the world; and looking upon it, he said: “Art thou, then, my empress? Art thou that great one to whom so many great ones bowed the knee? O my queen! where are now thy majesty and thy beauty?” “Even thus,” he said to himself, “do the grandeurs and crowns of this world end. From this day forward I will serve a Master who can never die.” From that time he gave himself entirely to the love of Jesus Christ crucified. He made the firm resolution that, if his wife should die, he would become a religious: which resolution he afterwards fulfilled by entering the Society of Jesus.

We, too, if we attentively listen to the voice of death, will not fail to form a firm resolution to prepare for a happy death. Death is the end of all our works, of our earthly pilgrimage; the harbor where we cast anchor, or are wrecked forever. On death depends eternity: eternal happiness or eternal misery is its necessary result. If we die well, we shall be saved eternally; if we die ill, we shall be eternally lost. We can die but once. Hence the infinite importance of this final act of our life. Yes, the day of death is the master-day,—the day that judges all the others. It is for this reason that this crisis naturally impresses every one with a feeling of awe.

One day the famous Father Gerard, before he had

entered the Order of Friars Preachers, read, in the fifth chapter of Genesis, the following passage: "Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years, and died; Seth lived nine hundred and twelve years, and died; Enos lived nine hundred and five years, and died; Mathusala lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and died." Here he closed the book, and exclaimed: "Thus ends the life of nearly ten centuries. It now appears as if it never had been. What a folly not to prepare for a happy death!" Saying this, he abandoned the world and entered a Dominican convent, where he died in the odor of sanctity.

The second of the last things of man is judgment. Wherever death meets us, Jesus Christ, too, will meet us; and if we are in mortal sin, he will condemn us to hell. It may be to-morrow, soon—much sooner than we expect. It may be in the very act of sin. Perhaps we will be hurried, unprepared, before our Eternal Judge. Then there shall be no mercy; nothing but justice,—unerring justice.

If we love our own happiness, let us prepare ourselves while we have yet time. The decisive moment shall come for every one of us,—that moment upon which a whole eternity depends.

It was this all-important truth that Philip Neri impressed so deeply upon the mind of Spazzara, a young man who came to him one day and said: "O father! I have some good news to tell you. My parents have at last consented to send me to the university, where I intend to study law." "Very well," said the saint; "and when you have finished your studies, what will you do then?" "Oh! then," said the young man, "I shall receive my diploma and be admitted to the bar." "And when you have received



your diploma and are admitted to the bar, what will you do then?" "Then I expect to receive a great deal of patronage, and hope to become renowned for wisdom and eloquence." "And what then?" asked St. Philip. "Oh! then, perhaps I shall become a judge or a governor, or receive some other important public office. I shall become rich, and be honored and admired by all." "And what will you do then?" asked the saint once more. "Well, then, when I have grown old, I shall rest and enjoy the fruits of my labors in a calm old age." "Well, supposing all this comes true," said the saint once more, "what will you do then?" "Then—then—" said the young man, in a more sober tone, "why, then I suppose I must die, like every one else." "Yes, you must die at last," said St. Philip, in a tone of fearful earnestness; "but what then? What shall you do when your own trial comes—when you shall be yourself the accused, Satan the accuser, and Almighty God your judge?" The young man was now quite serious; he little expected such a conclusion. The terrible thought of the hour of death, the strict judgment after death, and the endless eternity that awaited him in heaven or hell,—all this opened his eyes to the folly of earthly greatness. He went home, thought over the matter seriously, and at last, enlightened and strengthened by God, he quitted the world and consecrated himself to the service of God in a monastery, in order to prepare most earnestly for that final "What then?"—that is to say, that awful judgment which shall be followed by eternity. Let us be wise; let us prepare in time for the hour of death,—that hour of terror, when the past, the present, and the future will fill our souls with horror; when the world will recede from us; when the temptations of the devil will be

most fierce, and when we shall have to give a strict account of all our thoughts, words, and actions. Let us prepare for that fearful hour, by always making good confessions, and by being truly charitable to the poor.

The third of the four last things of man is hell. The frequent remembrance of hell is, for the greater part of mankind, a more powerful means to give up sin and lead holy lives, than the remembrance of death or judgment. "Yes," says St. Ignatius of Loyola, "he who warms himself often at the fire of hell during his life, will not fall into it after his death." St. Philip Neri used to say the same, in other words: "Whoever," he said, "often goes into hell in the course of his life, will keep out of it after his death." And with good reason; for there is no thought more powerful to assist us in overcoming the greatest temptations than that of eternal torments. The greatest saints have often renewed the memory of these torments for their greater spiritual advantage. St. Augustine often preached on hell. Whilst speaking on this subject, he trembled in his whole body, and affrighted his hearers by his palpitations more than by his words. "You tremble, my brethren," he said. "I, too, tremble, both for myself and for you. I have read our divine books; I have not read any passage in Holy Writ telling me not to fear." St. Jerome retired into the depths of a great wilderness. There his countenance was bathed in tears every day. The desert reëchoed with his sobs and sighs. He took a stone in his hand, and struck his breast with it until his breast began to bleed. What made him do all this? His great fear of hell, as he himself acknowledges in his letter to Eustochium.

St. John Chrysostom had hell painted in glaring colors

in the room in which he dwelt. At every glance, and in every action, he wished to recall to mind this salutary thought of hell. St. Bernard, having meditated deeply on hell one day, made a resolution never to laugh again during his life. From the depth of his solitude he cried out: "O hell, country of torments and of fire! to think of thee fills my soul with horror." (Serm. 5, de region.)

St. Francis Borgia often made his meditation on hell. He was once asked why he appeared so unusually sad. "I have made my meditation on hell," was the reply, "and I am so deeply impressed by it, that it seems to me the whole world is looking upon me as a monster of that abyss, spreading terror wherever it goes." St. Peter Damian tells us that his hair would stand on an end at the mere thought of an unhappy eternity.

St. Frances de Chantal used to tell her sisters in religion "that she would fear very much for the salvation of that one among them who would lose the fear of hell."

It was the fear of hell that induced the saints to renounce sin, and lead a life according to the holy will of God. The fear of hell is a holy fear and a gift of the Holy Ghost. This fear of hell made the saints overcome all difficulties and temptations.

Well did three noble youths answer their wicked companions, who tempted them to abandon their life of piety and devotion by saying: "Your life is too severe: you are too delicate: this kind of life is not fit for you." The youths thus repulsed their wicked suggestions. One said: "If I cannot now bear the crosses of a Christian life, how shall I be able to suffer hereafter the pains of hell?" The second answered: "Because I am delicate, and cannot bear much, I prefer, for the sake of heaven, to undergo a little

severity during my short stay on earth, rather than suffer eternal punishments." The third replied: "I can suffer here below, because God will assist me with his grace; but in hell I would be entirely abandoned by God forever." What beautiful sentiments! What wise answers! Every Christian should often repeat them to himself. He should remember that all the crosses and trials in this world last but for a short time; that they disappear altogether, as it were, if compared with the everlasting torments of hell. He should never forget that the sinful pleasures and joys of this world are in hell turned into most excruciating pains. This wholesome remembrance will induce him to avoid mortal sin and lead a holy life.

In the lives of the fathers of the desert, we read that a holy hermit named Martinian had already passed twenty-five years in a most austere retreat. His virtue was much extolled. A wicked woman named Zoe said, one day, before some persons: "Bah! I have no faith in his virtue, and I will engage to make him do whatsoever I desire." She dressed herself in her finest apparel, over which she put on some tattered rags, and taking some provisions with her, set out for the desert where dwelt the holy hermit. It was late at night when she reached his cell. She told him she had lost her way, and must crave his hospitality for the night. Martinian was touched, gave up his cell to her, and passed the night outside. Next morning the wretch stripped off her rags, reappeared before the hermit, and shamefully urged him to offend God, telling him that no one would know anything of it. Martinian hesitated a moment how to answer, but all at once he told Zoe to wait a few moments. Retiring to a corner of his cell, he heaped up wood, and kindled a great fire. Then taking off his sandals,



he sat down on the ground, and put his feet in the fire. The pain soon made him cry aloud. The temptress ran in, and then started back in terror. Martinian took occasion from this circumstance to exclaim several times: "Alas! if I cannot bear this fire for some minutes, how shall I bear the fire of hell for all eternity?" Zoe was so touched by this reflection, that she changed her life and became a saint.

The light of the eternal flames is to us an infallible guide, keeping us on the narrow path that leads to the eternal joys of heaven.

The celebrated Joseph Dominic Mansi, one of the most learned men of his age and of all Italy, in his youth did not lead a very regular life. His profession was that of a notary. One day he passed a church where a sermon was being preached. Impelled by curiosity, he entered. The subject of the sermon was the eternity of the torments of the damned. From time to time the preacher paused, and electrified his audience by crying out: "O eternity that shall never end!" The tone in which he pronounced these words produced an extraordinary effect on Mansi. He left the church absorbed in thought, and went on his way. Only now and then he stopped, and repeated to himself: "O eternity that shall never end!" On returning to his house, just as he was about to sit down to table, an inner voice seemed to repeat the same words in his ear: "O eternity that shall never end!" By night as well as by day, at prayer and at business alike, that important sentence sounded in his ear and occupied his mind. Touched, at length, by this heavenly warning, he left the world, became a priest, and, in 1769, was consecrated Archbishop of Lucca.

May this reflection never leave the heart of a Christian (for life is very short, whilst eternity is endless): Is it good traffic, at the price of a few years of sinful life, and those uncertain, to gain an eternity of torments? When Dathan and Abiron were swallowed up alive by the earth suddenly opening under their feet, those who were present at the painful spectacle instantly took to flight (Num. xvi, 34), and in their flight cried out: "Let us quickly depart hence, that the earth may not also devour us." Alas! thousands of sinners have been cast into the abyss of hell, where they burn, and will burn eternally, in punishment of their sins. Let us take a wholesome lesson from them. Let us avoid their crimes, their evil habits, which may also precipitate us into endless torments. Let us leave the company of sinners, hate and detest our own sins, clear ourselves by a sincere confession, lest hell devour us while we are in the state of mortal sin.

Lastly, the remembrance of heaven is another powerful means to induce us to give up sin, to detach ourselves from the goods and pleasures of this world, and to lead a heavenly life on earth.

Our future and true home is heaven. Oh, how full of joy and sweetness is that one word *heaven*, paradise! In the ear of the exile there is nothing sweeter than the name of *home*. What wonder, then, that the name of heaven should be so full of sweetness, since it is our true home, our home forever! When blessed Egidio heard any one speak of heaven, he was so overcome with joy that he flew into the air in an ecstasy of delight. He who often thinks on heaven, his true home, and often reflects on the ocean of perpetual delights in which the blessed are immersed, cannot help feeling most salutarily impressed by this

remembrance. Like St. Stanislas Kostka, he will say to himself: "I am born for a better, for a happier world than the world in which we live;" and with St. Augustine he will exclaim: "Earth seems to me vile and contemptible when I contemplate heaven."

St. Bernard, having reached man's estate, was not slow in perceiving that it is very hard to save one's soul in the world, and resolved to leave it. His parents and relatives loved him so much that, although they were full of faith and piety, they did their utmost to keep him amongst them. But Bernard made them understand so well the happiness and the advantages of the religious life, that he not only obtained their consent, but even prevailed on four of his brothers to follow him: it was only the youngest who remained in the paternal house. At the end of six months, these five young men quitted Châtillon-sur-Seine and passed by Fontaine, near Dijon, to ask their father's blessing. They then set out for the Abbey of Cîteaux, where they were to pronounce their vows. Crossing the court-yard of the Castle of Fontaine, they perceived little Nivard, their young brother, playing with some children of his own age. "Adieu, little brother Nivard!" said they. "We are going away: we leave you to inherit all our father's possessions: you shall have all our lands and all our wealth." "Yes, yes," answered the wise child, "you take heaven and leave me earth: the shares are not equal, and I will not be satisfied with mine." In fact, when little Nivard grew up, and his father had no need of his services, he went to rejoin his brothers in their monastery, and, in his turn, left earth for heaven." (*Ratisbonne, Life of St. Bernard.*)

The happiness that awaits us in heaven is unutterably

great. Were the happiness of the blessed not so great as it is, the Son of God would not have paid so high a price to obtain it for us; he would not have become man, and spent a life of thirty-three years in poverty, contradictions, and all sorts of sufferings. He would not have ended it on an infamous cross; nor would he have given such powers to his ministers, such as, to forgive sins, to change bread and wine into his body and blood. The true servants of God, in all ages, were deeply penetrated with this truth. Hence they were willing to undergo any kind of torment and pain, even the loss of their life, under the most trying and acute sufferings, rather than forfeit everlasting happiness.

Thousands of ways were found out by devilish malice to torture the followers of Christ. And the martyrs underwent all these sufferings for the sake of heaven.

Kings, queens, princes, emperors, have renounced the world, and shut themselves up in convents and solitudes, to make sure of heaven by a holy life. And heaven was worth all this, and more too, for St. Paul has said with truth: "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."

He who is in the habit of looking up to heaven, to the mansion of his heavenly Father, the palace of his glory, the temple of his holiness, and the throne of his grandeur and magnificence; the land of the living, the centre of our rest, the term of our movements, the end of our miseries, the place of the nuptials of the Lamb, the feast of God and his holy angels,—such a one will say to himself: "Were I to lose my eyes, I am content; for I must open them, one day, in the light of glory—I must gaze on the beauties of heaven. Were I to lose my hearing, I shall



not repine ; for I must listen one day to the choirs of the angels—my ears must drink in the ravishing melody of heaven. Were I forced to remain silent all the days of my life, I am willing to do so ; for I must one day sing, with the blessed in heaven, the glorious canticle of praise and gladness. Were I to become lame and helpless for life, and were I doomed to drag a long, weary existence in misery and pain, I shall not murmur ; for I must one day arise with a glorified body,—with a beautiful body gifted with swiftness and splendor and impassibility. And should I be hated and despised and downtrodden for God's sake, I shall bear it patiently ; for I must one day be honored by Jesus, in presence of all men,—in presence of the angels and saints, in presence of heaven and earth.

“ Though I am obliged to bid farewell to father and mother and to brother and sister ; and though I am forced to part from the nearest and dearest, with the grace of God I shall make the sacrifice, even though my poor heart should bleed ; for I must one day find a father and a mother, a brother and a sister, in the company of the angels and saints of God.

“ Whatever it may cost me, even had I to suffer all the torments of all the martyrs, I must one day see Mary in all her glory and beauty. I must love and live forever with her who is the glorious Mother of God, and my own mother. Whatever it may cost me, even though I had to pass through all the torments of hell, I must one day see my God face to face. I must love him, I must be transformed into him by the power of his burning love, and say for all eternity : ‘ Our Father who art in heaven.’ I must one day enter into those joys which ‘ no eye hath seen, and no ear hath heard, and which it hath never

entered the heart of man to conceive, but which God hath prepared for those that love and serve him.”

It may be asked here : What will become of this visible world, after the general judgment ? Is it to be altogether destroyed by fire ? According to the common opinion of the fathers and of theologians, the world will not be destroyed by fire, but will be renovated, so as to put on a more perfect form. The heavens and the planets will not be changed, but will receive new splendor. In the books of the Old and of the New Testament, we read that there will be new heavens and a new earth. “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth : and the former things shall not be in remembrance, and they shall not come upon the heart ; but you shall be glad and rejoice forever in these things which I create.” (Isa. lxxv, 17, 18.) St. Peter says : “We look for new heavens and a new earth according to his promises, in which justice dwelleth.” (2 Pet. iii, 13.) And St. John writes : “I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth were gone, and the sea is now no more.” (Apoc. xxi, 1.) He says : “A new heaven and a new earth, and the sea is now no more ;” not that the substance of the heaven, of the earth and of the sea, is changed, for the substance of the world shall be the same ; but the celestial as well as the terrestrial bodies shall put on a more perfect form in their accidental properties and in their surface. The heavens shall, according to Isaias, be clothed with new splendor : “And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun ; and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days.” (Isa. xxx, 26.)

New light shall be given to all the heavenly bodies, and this light, says St. Thomas, shall give to the firmament the

appearance of the new heaven which St. John saw. "In that renovation of the world," says St. Thomas, "the motions of the heavens shall cease, not from any other cause than the operation of the divine will." The sun and moon will move no more, but shall remain in the place which God will fix for them. The elements, too, shall be renewed, and shall, as St. Thomas says, acquire a new lustre.

The earth, says the Angelic Doctor, shall be, in its surface, transparent like glass. On the earth there shall be no more mountains or inequalities—its surface shall be perfectly smooth. This is the meaning of the words of St. John: "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." (Apoc. xvi, 20.) And although the earth shall have its natural density, "it will be clothed," says the holy doctor, "with the glory of brightness without prejudice to its density"—it shall shine like glass; and the whole earth, except where hell is situated, shall be transparent. The water shall be like crystal, not in solidity—because it shall always be a fluid—but in brightness and transparency. The air shall be beautiful, and resplendent as the heavens; and the fire shall be as brilliant as the light of the sun. Thus, according to St. Thomas, all the creatures that have served man shall receive greater perfection, which will not be natural, but supernatural and extraordinary; they will receive this perfection, not because they have merited it, but because men have merited that glory for the whole world, inasmuch as it redounds to their own greater glory.

All bodies in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, were created for the benefit of man. Now, as the inhabitants of the earth are raised to a state of glory, it is right that the earth itself, the place of their habitation,

should be renewed and clothed with beauty, not only in the superior, but also in the inferior bodies, in order that whatsoever has served for the use of man may receive new splendor; and that thus, according to the words of David, men may feel greater delight when they see that the works of God were made on purpose for their enjoyment. "Thou hast given me, O Lord!" says David, "a delight in thy doings; and in the works of thy hands I shall rejoice." (Ps. xci, 5.)

From this it appears, as St. Thomas says, that there shall be no more animals, nor plants, nor objects of a mixed nature, for all these shall be destroyed by fire. The animals and plants have been created for the support of man in the present life. Since the end ceases, the means should also cease. Neither can it be said that the perfection of this world consists in animals and plants; for, says St. Thomas, this kind of perfection belongs to the present state, but not to the more perfect state, of the world after the last day.

## 12. What means "Amen"?

*It means, "So it is," or, "So be it."*

The word "Amen" comes from the Hebrew verb *Aman*, which means sure or certain. It is, therefore, often used to affirm the certainty, the truth, of what is spoken, or the sincere assent of the hearers. When a passage of Holy Scripture begins with the word amen,—for instance, "Amen, amen, I say unto you,"—the word amen means *indeed, verily*, and is translated so.

## 13. What do we mean by the word "Amen," at the end of the Creed?



*That we firmly believe all that is contained in the Creed, and that we are resolved to live up to this belief, and to die in it.*

When the word "Amen" is found at the end of a passage of Holy Scripture, or at the conclusion of the prayers of the Church, it means, "So it is," or, "So be it;" that is, it means an interior assent to what has been said, or a true desire that what has been asked in prayer, may be done and granted to us. Thus we read, in the Old Testament, that when the Levites, according to the command of Moses, had said with a loud voice to all the people of Israel, "Cursed be he that honoreth not his father and mother," all the people were commanded to answer, "Amen;" that is, Let it be done, or, So be it. In like manner, when, at the end of the Creed, we say "amen," we mean to say, by this word, that we firmly believe every truth of the Creed, and that we are ready and willing to live up to this belief, and to die in it.

#### **14. Are we bound to profess this faith openly?**

*Yes, whenever the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of our neighbor require it; for Christ says: "Every one that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. x, 32, 33.)*

It is not enough to believe in our heart the truth of the Catholic Church. We are also bound, under pain of sin, to make an open profession of our religion. To deny our faith through human respect or false shame, to blush at the truths of the Gospel and the practices of Catholic piety, to disavow before men what we believe in our hearts, is

to commit a grievous sin, and to bring down on ourselves the severest chastisements of heaven, as we learn from our Lord Jesus Christ himself. He has told us in plain words : "Whoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven." In every age, the Church of Christ has considered the external denial of faith a most grievous sin, and has condemned as heretics all those who declared that, under certain circumstances, the denial of faith was lawful, and has even inflicted very severe penalties on those who, during the ages of persecution, denied their faith to save their lives; for, to deny the faith externally in a matter of the greatest importance is in itself a grievous sin; it is to reject openly as a falsehood what one believes in his heart to be the truth revealed by God.

Moreover, not only is a denial of our religion either by words or signs a grievous sin; but all dissimulation, by which others may think that we have denied that faith, is, too, a great sin. At the time of St. Cyprian, there were some weak Catholics who, in order to escape persecution, procured for money an attestation from the magistrates that they had complied with what the persecuting laws required of them, though in reality they had not. On account of such dissimulation, those weak Catholics were looked upon by the Church as traitors to their religion, and as such they were not allowed to assist at Mass and receive the sacraments until, by a long and severe penance, they had endeavored to expiate their crime, and to satisfy for the scandal which they had given. No matter how firmly we may be convinced in our hearts of the truth of our "religion and Church," if we deny it outwardly, by word, sign, or action, we can never "expect salvation

while in that state." The Holy Scriptures are clear and explicit on this point. In addition to the text quoted in the above answer, Christ says in St. Luke: "He that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God." (St. Luke xii, 9.) On this authority of Christ, St. Paul declares the same truth as a "faithful saying," and commands his disciple Timothy, and in his person all the pastors of God's Church, to preach and inculcate the same truth to their people. "A faithful saying, . . . if we deny him, he also will deny us. . . . These things admonish and testify in the Lord." (2 Tim. ii, 11, 12, 14.) From these words it evidently follows that, to deny Jesus Christ, and consequently to deny his faith or his Church, is a sin of the blackest dye, and one that, on the last day, will call down on us that dreadful sentence: "I know ye not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." (Luke xiii, 27.)

It cannot be said that the foregoing passages from our Lord and St. Paul apply only to the denying of Christ, and not to the denial of the faith and of the Church. That the denial of faith is included in these texts, and considered the same as denying Christ, is manifest from the following express declaration of Christ himself: "He that shall be ashamed of me and of *my words* in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." (Mark viii, 38.) In this text it is stated in the plainest terms that to be ashamed, not only of Christ, but also of his words, that is, of his doctrine, of his religion, and consequently of his Church,—the depository of that faith,—is a mortal sin, and will entail on the soul eternal damnation. But if "to be ashamed" of Christ and his

faith will damn the soul, how much more "the denying" of Christ and his faith? Nothing, therefore, should ever induce us to be guilty of so base a crime as is the betrayal of our faith. We must always be ready to lay down our lives sooner than to deny the faith of the Catholic Church.

There are two cases in which, in particular, we are obliged to make an open profession of our holy religion. These two cases are the honor and glory of God, or the spiritual welfare of our neighbor. If, for instance, a Catholic is called upon by public authority, whether just or unjust, to give an account of his religion, he should make an open profession of it; for, to be unwilling then to maintain or defend it through pride, human respect or worldly motives, that is, lest we should be contemned by others, or be laughed at by worldlings, is a great insult to Jesus Christ, a betrayal of our duty to him; is a preferring of what men may think of us to his approval, and is to be afraid of men more than of God. "Human respect and worldly motives" can never be received by God as an excuse for not making an "open profession" of our belief when we are bound to make it; for, concealing it through such unworthy motives, lest we should meet with any inconvenience, or be considered *bigoted* or *illiberal*, is a heinous sin, which God will severely punish hereafter. To be silent, when we are bound to speak out and declare our belief, is no less than to be ashamed of the faith of Christ and of the faith of our Church, and is sacrificing our duty to God to what others may say or think of us.

The honor of God, then, requires us to declare our faith openly, and not to be *ashamed of Christ nor of his words*, when we are questioned about our religion before a judge or public magistrate, though such "open profession of our



faith" may cost us all we have, or even our very lives. Hence all the holy martyrs, when examined before their persecuting judges, openly confessed their faith in Christ, and rejoiced, with the apostle, to suffer for his name. They suffered death itself in the midst of the most cruel torments, rather than do the smallest thing contrary to their holy faith, or even anything that had the appearance of being contrary to faith. Neither their parents, nor friends, nor love for their country, could prevail upon them to deny their religion. On those occasions they addressed their friends in words like these:—

Farewell, dear friends, we now must part,  
 For God I die with willing heart.  
 I see sad tears bedim your eye—  
 Weep not for me! 'Tis sweet to live, more sweet to die!  
 Weep not for me! Fond hearts, farewell!  
 Soon shall our grief be o'er:  
 In heaven we'll meet once more!

Farewell, dear land, that gave me birth,  
 My home, the dearest spot on earth!  
 Kind friends, bear home my parting sigh:  
 "For God to live is sweet; more sweet, more blest to die!"  
 Farewell, green hills, bright skies, farewell!  
 O scene surpassing rare!  
 But heaven is far more fair!

Farewell, fond mother! Bless thy child!  
 Farewell, dear father, good and mild.  
 Rejoice with me; repress each sigh,  
 And pray that I may falter not, may bravely die!  
 Farewell, fond hearts—farewell, farewell!  
 A crown of heavenly light  
 Gleams o'er me dazzling bright!

For over three hundred years the Irish people have suffered, struggled, and died for the faith. They suffered

poverty with all its bitterness, they endured exile with all its sorrows, they suffered outrage and even death itself, rather than lose their God. The minions of hell enacted the fiendish penal laws, and soon that country, so rich and fruitful in colleges and convents, became one vast, dreary wilderness. In tracts of country, thirty, forty, fifty miles in extent, the smoke from an inhabited house, as English chroniclers themselves declare, was nowhere to be seen. The people had disappeared and left only skeletons in the land. The living were to be met only in the glens and dark caves of the mountains. There they dragged out a wretched existence, feeding on the weeds and garbage of the earth. Like shadows they moved about, haggard and wan, starving and wounded, and they endured the cruel pangs of hunger, till God, in his mercy, took them to a better world. Again and again were these harrowing scenes repeated. Ireland became prosperous again in spite of the most galling oppression; and the people of Ireland were again starved and massacred for their faith, and those that survived were shipped off to the British West Indies, and sold there as slaves. The British fleet was ordered around the coast. Over eighty thousand of the most influential and most distinguished of the Irish Catholics were packed on board, and their bones have long since rotted in the soil of the English sugar-plantations of Jamaica.

The last effort of tyranny is still fresh in the minds of many—I mean the late famine years. There are, no doubt, some of my readers who have witnessed the appalling scenes of that gloomy period, and, once witnessed, they can never, never be forgotten. Ah! no. Like living fire, these horrid scenes burn into the memory, and leave there a horrid scar—a mark that can never be effaced. There

were thousands and thousands wasting away and dying of hunger. They were falling and dying as the leaves fall in autumn. The food that was sent to the poor people from America was kept in the harbors until it rotted. And there, in the sight of the famishing people, the wealthy Protestant, the overfed wives and daughters of the sleek, oily Protestant parsons, had plenty of food for their cattle, they had food in abundance for their pet birds or their lapdogs, whilst the poor starving Catholics wished to even eat the husks of the swine, and it was not given them.

A few years before the gloomy reign of terror, there lived near a certain town in Ireland a poor, honest farmer with his wife and children. They were poor, indeed, but yet they were contented and happy. Never did the poor or the stranger pass their door without partaking of their hospitality; and what they had, they gave with a willing heart. But the famine year came on. The good farmer was unable to pay the tithes. His little property was distrained. The police entered his farm; they seized his unreaped corn; they took away his crops; they drove his cattle to the pound. The poor unhappy man himself was expelled from that little spot of earth on which he was born, where he had lived so long, and where he had hoped to die. He was turned into the public road with his wife and children. No roof, no food, no clothing—he was cast in beggary and nakedness into the cold, heartless world. He sought for a shelter for his little ones. He sought for employment, but could find none. He was a Catholic. His neighbors around were bitter Protestants of the blackest dye. They offered him shelter, food, and clothing, but on one condition—that he would apostatize.

O God! who shall tell the agony of that poor, heart-broken father? No hope to cheer him save the hope of death; no eye to pity him save the all-merciful eye of God! He saw his poor wife dying before his eyes. He saw her wasting day by day—slowly pining away, while praying and weeping over her starving children; he heard his famished children crying for food, and their piteous cries rent his very soul. Oh! he could help them, he could provide them food, clothing, and a pleasant home—but then he must apostatize, he must renounce his holy faith! Oh! what a sore trial, what a cruel martyrdom! His loving wife died before his eyes—died of hunger. She died with words of patience, words of hope, upon her lips. The poor husband wrung his hands in anguish. He bent over the lifeless form of his wife. Dark night was thickening around him—thickening even within him; he felt the cruel pangs of hunger gnawing at his very vitals. And were he not upheld by his holy faith, he would have yielded to despair. But the cries of his children aroused him. He forgot for a moment his own sufferings. He took his two weak, starving babes in his trembling arms, and hurried away with tottering steps. He begged from house to house, from door to door; he begged for a crumb of bread for his poor, starving little ones, but no one gave him a morsel of food. They offered him food and clothing and shelter if he would only apostatize, if he would give his children to be brought up in their false creed. “But,” cried the heart-broken father, “oh! how could I give my children to be brought up in a false creed and deny their holy faith? Oh! how could I sell their souls to the Evil One for a mess of pottage?” After some time the unhappy man felt a heavy load weighing like lead upon his



trembling arm. He looked. One of his poor babes had ceased moaning. It was dead—cold and stiff in death. The heart-broken father sat down beneath a tree by the wayside and prayed, but he could not weep. Ah! no; his eyes were dry, his heart was withered. In wild, passionate tones he called on heaven to witness his agony—he called God to witness that he did not wish the death of his children, that he would gladly lay down his life to save his family, but he could not—oh! no! no!—he could not deny his holy faith; he could not sell their souls to the devil. He tried once more to obtain some food for his remaining child, but in vain, and at last the poor innocent sufferer gasped and died too in his arms. Ah! whose heart can remain unmoved at the sufferings of the Irish Catholics? Whose heart, at the same time, does not rejoice at their constancy in the faith?

When our neighbor's spiritual welfare requires it, we should, too, make open profession of our religion. If, for instance, another is in danger of denying his faith unless he is publicly encouraged or instructed; or, again, when we hear wicked men railing against the Gospel or ridiculing the truths of our religion, and at the same time have well-grounded hopes that, by defending those sacred truths, we shall check the impiety and railing of these unbelievers, and prevent others who are present from being hurt by these impious attacks on religion, it becomes then a duty to profess openly our esteem and veneration for the Gospel truths; for the *edification* of our neighbor and the honor of God require us to do so.

During the French Revolution a good Catholic Vendean, named Repoche, was taken prisoner by the infidel soldiers. They brought him to a place where a large cross had been

erected, and said to him : “ You have been taken with arms in your hands. Your life is forfeited. See ! yonder is the cottage in which you were born. Your father is there waiting for you. Now, your life will be spared, but on one condition.” The good soldier cast a longing look at his cottage. He thought of his aged father, he thought of his pleasant home. His brave heart was wrung with emotion, and the blinding tears rolled down his cheeks. “ Tell me,” he said, “ what must I do.” One of the infidel soldiers gave him an axe. “ Here,” said he, “ take this axe and cut down that cross, and you shall be set at liberty.” The Catholic soldier took the axe and deliberately walked over to the cross. His fellow-prisoners turned away their eyes. They were filled with grief at the thought that one of their number was about to abjure his God—deny his holy faith. Repoche stood at the foot of the cross. He looked around it with a brave and dauntless air, and brandishing the ponderous battle-axe over his head, he cried out in a loud voice : “ Death to the wretch that dares insult the cross of Jesus Christ. I shall defend it from dishonor as long as there is strength in this arm, or life-blood in this heart !” With flushed face and flashing eyes, the noble soldier brandished his terrible weapon with such force that no one dared approach him. At last the bloodthirsty soldiers transfixed him with their bayonets ; and the brave, noble Catholic, bleeding at every pore, threw his dying arms around the cross, and defended it to his last breath.

### 15. How do people lose the faith ?

1, *By going to schools forbidden by the Church ; 2, by the neglect of their religious duties ; 3, by the reading of bad books ; 4, by worldliness and a wicked life ; 5, by inter-*

*course with scoffers at religion ; 6, by mixed marriages ; 7, by becoming members of secret societies ; 8, by pride and subtle reasoning on the mysteries of religion.*

1. There are different causes which lead to apostasy from the faith—to infidelity. The most successful means ever employed by Satan to bring about gradually a universal falling-away from Christ and his religion, is the introduction of the present system of public, or state-school, education. This I have sufficiently shown in my book, “Public School Education.” In these schools no mention of God and religion is to be made. The best means to abolish religion is not to teach any. Children are to be brought up infidels. But there are some who assert that “there is no sectarian teaching in the public schools, and, consequently, a Catholic may send his children to them without exposing them to any danger.” Now, even supposing there really was no sectarian teaching in the common schools, even then a Catholic parent cannot send his children to such a school without exposing them to the greatest danger. Those who approve of the public school, because nothing sectarian is taught there, act like a certain husbandman who wished to transplant a fine young tree to a certain part of his garden. On examining the new place, however, he found that the ground was filled with poisonous ingredients, which would greatly endanger the life of the tree. He therefore transplanted the tree to a sandy hill, where there were, indeed, no poisonous ingredients, but where there was also no nourishment for the tree. Now, will any one assert that the young tree was not in danger of perishing in this new place ? And will any one assert that the faith and soul of a child are not in danger of being ruined in those godless common schools ?

Even if Protestantism is not taught there, infidelity is taught and practised there: and infidelity is even worse than Protestantism.

But is it really true that Protestantism is not taught in many of our public schools? This is unfortunately far from being the case. Napoleon I introduced the public-school system into France, in order, as he honestly declared, "to possess the means of controlling political and moral opinions." Puritans and Freemasons, in this country, have clearly the same end in view in upholding the present system of public schools.

In the early days of New England, and even of several of the other American States, the Puritans always used the public schools as a powerful means of spreading their peculiar doctrines. When they were stripped of this power by the liberal founders of American independence, they still struggled for many years to accomplish, by indirect means, the injustice which they dared not *maintain* openly. We all remember how the poor Catholic boys and girls of the public schools were harassed by colporteurs and proselytizers, who carried baskets filled, not with bread for the poor hungry children,—no, but with oily tracts, cunningly devised to weaken, or even destroy, the religious faith of those poor little ones. In some schools, even, Catholic children were urged and enticed to go to the sectarian Sunday schools; and pictures, cakes, and sweetmeats were liberally promised, in order to induce them to go. Teachers were selected with special regard to their bitter hatred of the Catholic Church, and their zeal for "evangelical" propagandism. Some years ago, in New Orleans, when the school-board was composed of bigoted sectarians, many of them sectarian preachers, all the



Catholic teachers, male and female, were turned out of the schools, merely because they were Catholics.

And even if Catholic children are not always expressly taught doctrines opposed to their religion, nevertheless the school-books which they use are, as I have said, frequently tainted with anti-Catholic prejudices and misrepresentations. Nothing can be more evident than the decidedly anti-Catholic spirit of English literature in all its departments. It has grown up, ever since England's apostasy, in an anti-Catholic soil, in an anti-Catholic atmosphere, and from an anti-Catholic stem. It is essentially anti-Catholic, and tends, wherever it comes in contact with Catholic feelings and principles, to sully, infect, and utterly corrupt them. *Sound knowledge, a sound head, strong faith, and great grace*,—all these combined may, indeed, preserve one whom the necessity of his position may lead into un-Catholic schools; but no one will deny that this anti-Catholic literature must exercise a most baneful influence over all those who, without sufficient preparation from nature or grace, plunge into it, in the pursuit of amusement or knowledge. Protestant ideas will not make the Catholic turn Protestant,—there is not much danger of that,—but they will tend to make him an infidel; they will destroy his principles without putting others in their place; they will relax and deaden the whole spiritual man.

In these schools Catholic children are taught that the Catholic Church is the nursery of ignorance and vice; they are taught that all the knowledge, civilization, and virtue which the world now possesses, are the offspring of the so-called "Reformation." They learn nothing of the true history of Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, Ireland, Austria, and the other Catholic countries of Europe; they

learn nothing of the true history of Mexico, and the various Catholic countries of North and South America. They never hear of the vast libraries of Catholic learning, the rich endowments of Catholic education, all over the world, for ages; they never hear of the countless universities, colleges, academies, and free schools established by the Catholic Church, and by Catholic governments, throughout Christendom. Where is the common-school book whose author has manly honesty enough to acknowledge that even the famous universities of Oxford and Cambridge were founded by Catholics, and plundered from their lawful possessors by an apostate government?

Moreover, Catholic children are often singled out by their school-companions, and sometimes even by their teachers, as objects of ridicule. Now, what is the result of all this training? The consequence is, that either the Catholic children become ashamed of their holy religion, and despise their parents, or, if they have the courage to hold out, their tender minds are subject to numberless petty annoyances: they must endure a species of martyrdom. This is no exaggeration: I have it from good authority. Practically speaking, the present common-school system is but a gigantic scheme for proselytism and infidelity.

Now, we intend that our children shall be taught to love and revere their holy Church. We wish to teach them that that Church has been, for over eighteen hundred years, the faithful guardian of that very Bible of which Protestants prate so loudly, and which they dishonor so much. We wish our children to learn that the Catholic Church has been, in all ages, the friend and supporter of true liberty; *i. e.*, liberty united to order and justice. We wish them to know that the Catholic Church has ever been

the jealous guardian of the sanctity of marriage; that she has always defended it against brutal lust and heathen divorce courts. We wish our children, in fine, to regard the Church as the only hope of society, the only salvation of their country, the only means of preserving intact all the blessings of freedom.

The public schools are not only seminaries of infidelity, they are, moreover, in many cases, hotbeds of immorality. In these schools every child is received, no matter how vicious or corrupt he or his parents may be. "One mangy sheep," as the homely proverb says, "infects the whole flock." So one corrupt child in a school is capable of corrupting and ruining all the others. And, in fact, where have our young people learned the shameful habit of self-abuse, and many other foul, unnatural crimes, that are bringing so many thousands to an early grave? Ask those unhappy victims, ask our physicians throughout the country, and they will tell you that, in almost every instance, it was from the evil companions with whom they associated in the common schools. Ah! you will see, only on the day of judgment, how many unnatural crimes have been taught and propagated, from generation to generation, in these very hotbeds of iniquity.

A certain friend of mine—a man of great learning and experience—wrote to me, one day, that he himself had been, in his youth, subjected to college-training; that, be it by nature or by grace, or both combined, he resisted and escaped. "But," he adds, "from my observation and experience, I would say it did require a miracle for Catholic youth to escape the damnable effects of a non-Catholic education." I have had opportunities, in this line, that many a priest has never had. I assert that a Catholic

boy of tender years, and perhaps careless training, can be preserved from moral contamination, in public and mixed schools, by nothing less than a miracle. I will not chop logic with any one about it. It is a matter of fact. I therefore assert it as of ascertained result, that in *most* cases—*especially* in those cases where there are enough of Catholics together to have a school of their own—their frequenting a school without religion will land *most* of them in utter carelessness of their religion.

2. Many fall away from the faith because their parents neglected giving them any instruction in religion. There is a certain class of parents who have their children instructed in everything but their religion. There are other parents who allow their children to grow up in ignorance of everything except in the manner in which they may make some money. Now, when the time draws near for these children to make their first communion, their parents will take them to the priest to prepare them for this holy action in a week or two. Now, what can children learn in a couple of weeks? Certain it is that what they learn very seldom enters their hearts. Their hearts are not prepared for the Word of God; they are light-minded, and, in many cases, corrupted, and what they do learn is learned from constraint. No sooner are they free from constraint than they throw their religion overboard: they become the worst enemies of the Catholic Church. The young man who set fire to St. Augustine's Church, in Philadelphia, Pa., was a Catholic, and he gloried in being able to burn his name out of the baptismal record. By a just punishment of God, these neglected Catholic children will become our persecutors. Thus is verified in these children what God says through the Prophet Isaias: "Therefore is my



people led away captive because they had not knowledge." (Isa. v, 13.)

There are others who do not wish to be instructed in their religious duties, in order that they may more easily dispense themselves from the obligation of complying with these duties. Now, it is this very class of men that easily give ear to the principles of infidelity, because these principles please their corrupt nature better than those of our holy religion. The class of these men is very numerous, and their number is on the increase every day. For, not having any religion themselves, nor wishing to have any, what wonder if their children follow their example? Such as the tree is, such also will be the fruit. A few weeks ago, a Catholic lady of New York asked a little child: "How many Gods are there, and who made you?" The child could not answer these questions. So the Catholic lady said to the child: "Say, 'There is but one God;' say, 'God made me.'" When the mother of the child heard this she flew into a passion, and said: "My child shall never learn such a thing: God has nothing to do with my child." Behold how infidel mothers bring up their children!

There are others who gradually fall away from the faith and become infidels, because they neglect a most essential Christian duty, that of prayer. "The impious," says David, "are corrupt, and they become abominable in their ways. . . . They are all gone aside; they are unprofitable together: there is none that does good, no, not one. . . . Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways." "Now, the cause of all this wickedness," continues David, "is because they have not called upon the Lord." God is the light of our understanding, the strength of our will, and

the life of our heart. Now, the more we neglect to pray to God, the more we shall experience darkness in our understanding, weakness in our will, and deadly coldness in our heart. Our passions, the temptations of the devil, and the allurements of the world, will draw us headlong from one abyss of wickedness to another, until we fall into the deepest of all,—into infidelity, and indifference to all religion.

3. There is another special cause of the loss of faith : it is the reading of bad books. Bad books are, 1, idle, useless books which do no good, but distract the mind from what is good. 2. Many novels and romances which do not appear to be so bad, but often are bad. 3. Books which treat professedly of bad subjects. 4. Bad newspapers, journals, miscellanies, sensational magazines, weeklies, illustrated papers, medical works. 5. Superstitious books, books of fate, etc. 6. Protestant and infidel books and tracts.

There are certain idle, useless books, which, though not bad in themselves, are pernicious, because they cause the reader to lose the time which he might and ought to spend in occupations more beneficial to his soul. He who has spent much time in reading such books, and then goes to prayer, to Mass, and to holy communion, instead of thinking of God and of making acts of love and confidence, will be constantly troubled with distractions ; for the representations of all the vanities he has read will be constantly present to his mind.

The mill grinds the corn which it receives. If the wheat be bad, how can the mill turn out good flour ? How is it possible to think often of God, and offer to him frequent acts of love, of oblation, of petition, and the like, if the mind is constantly filled with the trash read in idle, useless

books? In a letter to his disciple Eustochium, St. Jerome stated for her instruction that, in his solitude at Bethlehem, he was attached to, and frequently read, the works of Cicero, and that he felt a certain disgust for pious books, because their style was not polished. Almighty God, foreseeing the harm of this profane reading, and that, without the aid of holy books, the saint would never reach that height of sanctity for which he was destined, administered a remedy, very harsh, no doubt, but well calculated to make him alive to his fault. He sent a grievous sickness on him, which soon brought the solitary to the brink of the grave. As he was lying at the point of death, God called him in spirit before his tribunal. The saint, being there, heard the Judge ask him who he was. He answered unhesitatingly: "I am a Christian; I hold no other faith than thine, my Lord, my Judge." "Thou liest," said the Judge; "thou art a Ciceronian, for, where thy treasure is, there thy heart is also." He then ordered him to be severely scourged. The servant of God shrieked with pain as he felt the blows, and begged for mercy, repeating with a loud voice, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord! have mercy upon me." Meanwhile, they who stood round the throne of that angry Judge, falling on their faces before him, began to plead in behalf of the culprit, implored mercy for him, and promised in his name that his fault should be corrected. Then St. Jerome, who, smarting with pain from the hard strokes he had received, would gladly have promised much greater things, began to promise and to swear, with all the ardor of his soul, that never again would he open profane or worldly works, but that he would read pious, edifying books. As he uttered these words he returned to his senses, to the amazement of the bystanders, who had believed him to be already dead.

St. Jerome concludes the narration of this sad history with these words : " Let no one fancy that it was an idle dream, like to those which come to deceive our minds in the dead of night. I call to witness the dread tribunal before which I lay prostrate, that it was no dream, but a true representation of a real occurrence ; for, when I returned to myself, I found my eyes swimming with tears, and my shoulders livid and bruised with those cruel blows." He tells us, finally, that, after this warning, he devoted himself to the reading of pious books, with the same diligence and zeal that he had before bestowed upon the works of profane writers. It was thus that Almighty God induced him to that study of divine things which was so essential to his own progress in perfection, and destined to do so much good to the whole Christian world.

It is true that, in works like those of Cicero, we sometimes find useful sentiments ; but the same St. Jerome wisely said, in a letter to another disciple : " What need have you of seeking for a little gold in the midst of so much dross, when you can read pious books, in which you shall find all gold without any dross ? " (Epis. ad Furian.)

As to novels, they are, in general, pictures, and usually very highly wrought pictures, of human passions. Passion is represented as working out its end successfully, and attaining its objects, even by the sacrifice of duty. These books, as a class, present false views of life ; and as it is the error of the young to mistake these for realities, they become the dupes of their own ardent and enthusiastic imaginations, which, instead of trying to control, they actually nourish with the poisonous food of phantoms and chimeras.

When the thirst for novel-reading has become insatiable,



—as with indulgence it is sure to do,—they come at last to live in an unreal fairy-land, amidst absurd heroes and heroines of their own creation, thus unfitting themselves for the discharge of the common duties of this every-day world, and for association with every-day mortals. The more strongly works of fiction appeal to the imagination, and the wider the field they afford for its exercise, the greater in general are their perilous attractions; and it is but too true that they cast, at last, a sort of spell over the mind, so completely fascinating the attention, that duty is forgotten and positive obligation laid aside to gratify the desire of unravelling, to its last intricacy, the finely-spun web of some airy creation of fancy. Fictitious feelings are excited, unreal sympathies aroused, unmeaning sensibilities evoked. The mind is weakened; it has lost that laudable thirst after truth which God has imprinted on it; filled with a baneful love of trifles, vanity, and folly, it has no taste for serious reading and profitable occupations; all relish for prayer, for the Word of God, for the reception of the sacraments, is lost; and, at last, conscience and common-sense give place to the dominion of unchecked imagination. Such reading, instead of forming the heart, depraves it. It poisons the morals and excites the passions; it changes all the good inclinations a person has received from nature and a virtuous education; it chills, by little and little, pious desires, and in a short time banishes out of the soul all that was there of solidity and virtue. By such reading, young girls on a sudden lose a habit of reservedness and modesty, take an air of vanity and frivolity, and make show of no other ardor than for those things which the world esteems, and which God abominates. They espouse the maxims, spirit, conduct, and language of the passions,

which are there under various disguises artfully instilled into their minds; and, what is most dangerous, they cloak all this irregularity with the appearances of civility and an easy, complying, gay humor and disposition.

St. Teresa, who fell into this dangerous snare of reading idle books, writes thus of herself: "This fault failed not to cool my good desires, and was the cause of my falling insensibly into other defects. I was so enchanted with the extreme pleasure I took herein, that I thought I could not be content if I had not some new romance in my hands. I began to imitate the mode, to take delight in being well dressed, to take great care of my hands, to make use of perfumes, and to affect all the vain trimmings which my condition admitted. Indeed, my intention was not bad, for I would not for the world, in the immoderate passion which I had to be decent, give any one an occasion of offending God; but I now acknowledge how far these things, which for several years appeared to me innocent, are effectually and really criminal."

Criminal and dangerous, therefore, is the disposition of those who fritter away their time in reading such books as fill the mind with a worldly spirit, with a love of vanity, pleasure, idleness, and trifling; which destroy and lay waste all the generous sentiments of virtue in the heart, and sow there the seeds of every vice. Who seeks nourishment from poisons? Our thoughts and reflections are to the mind what food is to the body; for, by them, the affections of the soul are nourished. The chameleon changes its color as it is affected by pain, anger, or pleasure, or by the color upon which it sits; and we see an insect borrow its lustre and hue from the plant or leaf upon which it feeds. In like manner, what our meditations and affections are,

such will our souls become—either holy and spiritual, or earthly and carnal.

In addition to their other dangers, many of these books unfortunately teem with maxims subversive of faith in the truths of religion. The current popular literature in our days is penetrated with the spirit of licentiousness, from the pretentious quarterly to the arrogant and flippant daily newspaper; and the weekly and monthly publications are mostly heathen or maudlin. They express and inculcate, on the one hand, stoical, cold, and polished pride of mere intellect, or, on the other, empty and wretched sentimentality. Some employ the skill of the engraver to caricature the institutions and offices of the Christian religion, and others, to exhibit the grossest forms of vice and the most distressing scenes of crime and suffering. The illustrated press has become to us what the amphitheatre was to the Romans, when men were slain, women were outraged, and Christians were given to the lions, to please a degenerate populace. “The slime of the serpent is over it all.” It instils the deadly poison of irreligion and immorality through every pore of the reader. The fatal miasma floats in the whole literary atmosphere, is drawn in with every literary breath, corrupting the very life-blood of religion in the mind and soul. Thus it frequently happens that the habitual perusal of such books soon banishes faith from the soul, and in its stead introduces infidelity. He who often reads bad books will soon be filled with the spirit of the author who wrote them. The first author of pious books is the Spirit of God; but the author of bad books is the devil, who artfully conceals from certain persons the poison which such works contain. Written, as they generally are, in a most attractive, flowery style, the reader becomes

enchanted, as it were, by their perusal, not suspecting the poison that lies hidden under that beautiful style, and which he drinks as he reads on.

But it is objected the book is not so bad. Of what do bad books treat? What religion do they teach? Many of them teach either deism, atheism, or pantheism. Others ridicule our holy religion and everything that is sacred. What morals do these books teach? The most lewd. Vice and crime are deified; monsters of humanity are held out as true heroes. Some of these books speak openly and shamelessly of the most obscene things, whilst others do so secretly, hiding their poison under a flowery style. They are only the more dangerous, because their poisonous contents enter the heart unawares.

A person was very sorry to see that a certain bad book was doing so much harm. He thought he would read it, that he might be better able to speak against it. With this object in view, he read the book. The end of it was that, instead of helping others, he ruined himself.

Some say: "I read bad books on account of the style. I wish to improve my own style. I wish to learn something of the world." This is no sufficient reason for reading such books. The good style of a book does not make its poisonous contents harmless. A fine dress may cover a deformed body, but it cannot take away its deformity. Poisonous serpents and flowers may be very beautiful, but, for all that, they are not the less poisonous. To say that such books are read purely because of their style is not true, because those who allege this as an excuse, sometimes read novels which are written in a bad style. There are plenty of good books, written in excellent style, which are sadly neglected by these lovers of pure English.



To consult those books for a knowledge of the world is another common excuse for their perusal. Well, where shall we find an example of one who became a deeper thinker, a more eloquent speaker, a more expert business man, by reading novels and bad books? They only teach how to sin, as Satan taught Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden tree, under the pretence of attaining real knowledge; and the result was, loss of innocence, peace, and paradise, and the punishment of the human race through all time.

Some profess to skip the bad portions and read only the good. But how are they to know which are the bad portions, unless they read them? The pretext is a false one. He only will leave the bad who hates it. But he who hates the bad things will not read the books at all, unless he be obliged to do so: and no one is obliged to read them, for there are plenty of good, profitable, and entertaining books which can be read without danger.

There is a class of readers who flatter themselves that bad books may hurt others, but not them; they make no impression on them. Happy and superior mortals! Are they gifted with hearts of stone, or of flesh and blood? Have they no passions? Why should these books hurt others and not them? Is it because they are more virtuous than others? Is it not true that the bad, obscene parts of the story remain more vividly and deeply impressed upon their minds than those which are more or less harmless? Did not the perusal of these books sometimes cause those imaginations and desires forbidden by Christian modesty? Did they not sometimes accuse themselves in confession of having read them? If not, they ought to have done so. Who would like to die with such a book in his hand?

Readers of bad books, who say such reading does not affect them, should examine themselves and see whether they are not blinded by their passions, or so far gone in crime that, like an addled egg, they cannot become more corrupt than they already are.

See that infamous young man, that corrupter of innocence ! What is the first step often of a young reprobate who wishes to corrupt some poor, innocent girl ? He first lends her a bad book. He believes that, if she reads that book, she is lost. A bad book, as he knows, is an agreeable corrupter ; for it veils vice under a veil of flowers. It is a shameless corrupter. The most licentious would blush, would hesitate to speak the language that their eyes feed on. But a bad book does not blush, feels no shame, no hesitation. Itself unmoved and silent, it places before the heart and imagination the most shameful obscenities.

A bad book is a corrupter to whom the reader listens without shame, because it can be read alone and taken up when one pleases !

Go to the hospitals and brothels : ask that young man who is dying of a shameful disease ; ask that young woman who has lost her honor and her happiness ; go to the dark grave of the suicide,—ask them what was the first step in their downward career, and they will answer, the reading of bad books.

A certain young lady of the State of New York was sent to a convent school, where she received a brilliant education. She spoke seven languages. She wished to enter a convent, but was prevented by her parents. Her parents died, and after their death the young lady took to novel-reading. She soon wished to imitate what she had read : she wished to become a heroine. So she went upon

the stage, and danced in the "Black Crook." At last she fell one day on Second Avenue, in New York, and broke her leg in six places. She was taken to a hospital, where a good lady gave her a prayer-book. But she flung it away, and asked for a novel. She would not listen to the priest encouraging her to make her confession and be reconciled to God. She died impenitent, with a novel in her hand.

Assuredly, if we are bound by every principle of our religion to avoid bad company, we are equally bound to avoid bad books; for, of all evil, corrupting company, the worst is a bad book. There can be no doubt that the most pernicious influences at work in the world at this moment come from bad books and bad newspapers. The yellow-covered literature, as it is called, is a pestilence compared with which the yellow fever, and cholera, and small-pox are as nothing: and yet there is no quarantine against it. Never take a book into your hands which you would not be seen reading. Avoid not only notoriously immoral books and papers, but avoid also all those miserable sensational magazines and novels and illustrated papers which are profusely scattered around on every side. The demand which exists for such garbage, speaks badly for the moral sense and intellectual training of those who read them. If you wish to keep your mind pure and your soul in the grace of God, you must make it a firm and steady principle of conduct never to touch them.

Would you be willing to pay a man for poisoning your food? And why should you be fool enough to pay the authors and publishers of bad books, pamphlets, and magazines, and the editors of irreligious newspapers for poisoning your soul with their impious principles and their shameful stories and pictures.

Go, then, and burn all bad books in your possession, even if they do not belong to you, even if they are costly. Two boys in New York bought a bad picture with their pocket-money, and burned it. A young man in Augusta, Ga., spent twenty dollars in buying up bad books and papers, to burn them all. A modern traveller tells us that, when he came to Evora, he there on Sunday morning conversed with a girl in the kitchen of the inn. He examined some of her books which she showed him, and told her that one of them was written by an infidel, whose sole aim was to bring all religion into contempt. She made no reply to this, but, going into another room, returned with her apron full of dry sticks, all of which she piled upon the fire and produced a blaze. She then took that bad book and placed it upon the flaming pile; then, sitting down, she took her rosary out of her pocket, and told her beads until the book was entirely burned up. (*Compitum*, book ii, p. 239.)

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that, when St. Paul preached at Ephesus, many of the Jews and Gentiles were converted to the faith: "And many of them that believed, came confessing and declaring their deeds. And many of those who had followed curious arts, brought together their books and burnt them before all. And counting the price of them, they found the money to be fifty thousand pieces of silver." (Acts xix, 18, 19.)

A young nobleman, who was on a sea voyage, began to read an obscene book, in which he took much pleasure. A religious priest, on noticing it, said to him: "Are you disposed to make a present to our Blessed Lady?" The young man replied that he was. "Well," said the priest, "I wish that, for the love of the most holy Virgin, you



would give up that book and throw it into the sea." "Here it is, father," answered the young man. "No," replied the priest, "you must yourself make this present to Mary." He did so at once. Mary was not slow in rewarding the nobleman for the great promptness with which he cast the bad book into the sea; for, no sooner had he returned to Genoa, his native place, than the Mother of God so inflamed his heart with divine love, that he entered a religious order. (Nadasi, *Ann. Mar. S. J.*, 1605.)

4. Another cause that leads to the loss of faith is the corruption of the heart, the slavery of the passions. You will find men who deny the immortality of the soul, who deny the eternity of hell, who deny the infallibility of the Church. You will find men who deny the divine origin of confession. But why, my brethren, why? It is because these wholesome truths put a check to their passions. They cannot believe these truths and, at the same time, gratify their criminal desires.

An honest, virtuous man would never think of doubting or contradicting these sacred truths. In spite of its innate pride, the mind is the slave of the heart. If the heart soars to heaven on the wings of divine love, the mind, too, rises with it. But if the heart is buried in the mire of filthy passions, it soon exhales dark, fetid vapors, which obscure the intellect. The infidel's reason is the dupe of his heart.

There is a man who was once a good Catholic, who used formerly to go regularly to Mass and to confession. Now he goes no longer to confession, now he is an infidel. But why? Has he, perhaps, become more enlightened? Has he received some new knowledge? No; the only new knowledge he has received, is the sad knowledge of sin. He believed as long as he was virtuous. He began to doubt

only when he began to be immoral; he became an infidel only when he became a libertine. The history of his life is soon told. Wishing to gratify his passions without restraint and without remorse, he tried to rid himself of a religion which would have troubled him in the midst of his unlawful pleasures. Religion appeared to him like the hand on the wall, writing his doom in the very midst of his senseless revelry. Human respect, and the gratification of his passions, are the only causes that induced him to become an infidel.

5. To frequent the society of the wicked, of scoffers at religion, is, for many, another cause of losing the faith. A scoffer at religion is a man without principle, a man sunk in the grossest ignorance of what religion is. He blasphemes what he does not understand. He rails at the doctrines of the Church, without really knowing what these doctrines are. He sneers at the doctrines and practices of religion, because he cannot refute them. He speaks with the utmost gravity of the fine arts, the fashions, and even matters the most trivial, and he turns into ridicule the most sacred subjects. In the midst of his own circle of fops and silly women, he utters his shallow conceits with all the pompous assurance of a pedant.

There is a young man. He was brought up a Catholic. He went every day to a Catholic school until he made his first communion. He learned his catechism well. But his parents complain that he no longer says any morning or night prayers, that he goes no longer to confession, to holy communion, and to Mass on Sundays. Why not? It is because he frequents the society of wicked companions, who ridicule religion and scoff at everything sacred. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." In the company

of such wicked young men he soon feels ashamed of his religion, becomes quite indifferent to it, gives up every practice of piety, and finally becomes an infidel, a scoffer at religion himself.

6. Experience has sufficiently shown that mixed marriages are also a cause why many have lost their faith. This is the reason why the Catholic Church has always opposed them. The Catholic party is generally exposed to the danger of losing the faith, or of becoming indifferent to it. The Catholic education of the children is also generally neglected, and often made impossible.

There is a congregation in one of the Middle States, which numbers about two hundred families. There are not fewer than fifty-seven mixed marriages in it. The number of converts is but six, and the number of those who gave up the Catholic religion is twenty-two. As to the children, there are at present found fifty-four who are being instructed in the rudiments of our religion, and it is hoped that they will adhere to the practice of her doctrines. But there are one hundred and thirty-seven who are receiving their religious training in some religious sect, or are left to grow up in utter ignorance. There are thirty-one more whose ultimate end is as yet doubtful. The number of perverted Catholics is nearly four to one in this congregation. There is no reason to believe that mixed marriages are less productive of evil in other congregations. We shall say more on this point in the explanation of the sacrament of matrimony.

7. The state of irreligion and infidelity into which millions of men who were Catholics are plunged at present, is the work of secret societies—of Freemasonry. In the first volume of this work, Part I, I have clearly proved that the

principal object of Freemasonry is to destroy all revealed religion, and to introduce heathenism in its place. To join any of the secret societies is to give up the Catholic religion ; for the Catholic Church has excommunicated all those who have joined a secret society. Nevertheless there are thousands who join these satanic societies, and give up God and his holy religion for Satan and his work of impiety.

8. Pride, and subtle reasoning on the mysteries of faith, is another means which the devil uses to make people lose the faith.

There are certain proud men who say that they cannot believe such an article or such a mystery of faith, because it is too obscure, too incomprehensible, and contrary to reason ; they wish to believe no more of the truths of religion than they can understand. Hence they bring up ever so many objections to revealed truths, and thus exhibit a lamentable lack of reason. For, to be a man, it is necessary to have reason. Reason is the light of man. But reason tells us that it is necessary to believe what God has revealed, because God cannot reveal anything but truth, and that there is no sense in him who wishes to submit to his reason the very Author of his reason ; and that to wish to understand what is above his intelligence, is to be without intelligence. There is a young man. He is a Catholic, who always believed what God teaches us through his Church. He frequently associates with one who, in a subtle manner, reasons on the mysteries of faith. He begins to listen to him with pleasure. The consequence is that he exposes himself to all kinds of temptations against faith. He begins himself to reason on its mysteries, then to doubt them, and at last to lose all faith in them. He dies an infidel.



Alas! how many are there who once were fervent children of the Catholic Church; they lived in the grace of God, in great happiness and peace, but, for the reason just given, are now leading the wicked lives of infidels! Their misfortune should be a warning for us all. Therefore, "Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x, 12.)

**FINIS.**









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